

Juho Santasalo

Democratizing online political discussion: A practice-oriented exploration in service design

MA Thesis
30 ECTS for MA in New Media

Media Lab Helsinki
Department of Media
Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture (ARTS)

2016

Colophon

The text in this thesis is set in Georgia.

Headings are set in Helvetica Neue.

The lay-out is designed by me, done in Adobe InDesign on a MacBook Pro and output as PDF.

Paper version: Digital printing by Sokkeli, Helsinki.

The photos are mostly taken by me. Curve and colours are adjusted for printing in Adobe Photoshop Lightroom.

Juho Santasalo

Democratizing online political discussion: A practice-oriented exploration in service design

MA Thesis
30 ECTS for MA in New Media

Media Lab Helsinki
Department of Media
Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture (ARTS)

2016

Democratizing online political discussion: A practice-oriented exploration in service design

Tiivistelmä

Tämä opinnäytetyö soveltaa ihmislähtöisiä muotoilumenetelmiä tutkiakseen ratkaisuja, jotka voisivat mahdollistaa parempaa poliittista keskustelua Internetissä. Työ sisältää valikoivan katsauksen demokratian teorioita, e-demokratian historiaa, sekä kollektiivisen älykkyyden käsitettä ja aiempia töitä. Tekijä esittelee etnografisen lähestymistapansa muotoiluun, joka hyödyntää käytäntöteoriaa näkökulmana. Lähestymistapa sisältää metodeina muun muassa vertailukehittämistä, haastatteluja, sekä osallistavan muotoilun menetelmiä muodostaakseen ymmärryksen

mahdollisista ratkaisuista ja inspiroidakseen luovaa suunnittelua. Suunnittelun puitteissa kehitetään useampia ideoita, joiden potentiaalisia vaikutuksia ja ansioita myös arvioidaan. Synteesin puitteissa kehitetään näkökulma ja määritetään ongelma, johon esitetään lopullinen konsepti ratkaisuna. Lopputulosta ja menetelmiä arvioidaan kriittisesti ja tulevaisuuden jatkotutkimusaiheita esitetään. Opinnäytetyö liittyy e-demokratiaan.

Avainsanat

palvelumuotoilu, e-demokratia, politiikka, käytännöt

Laitos

Median laitos, Media Lab Helsinki

Koulutusohjelma

Uuden median maisteriohjelma

Valvoja

Rasmus Vuori

Ohjaaja

Mia Muurimäki

Sivumäärä

104

Democratizing online political discussion: A practice-oriented exploration in service design

Abstract

This thesis applies human-centred design methods to explore solutions that could facilitate better political discussion online. Selected works relating to democratic theories, e-democracy, and collective intelligence are reviewed. To address the challenge, the author develops and argues for an ethnographic design research approach utilising practice theory. The approach uses benchmarking, interviews, and design co-creation to form an understanding of the design space and to inspire ideas. Several ideas are developed during the design work and their merits are evaluated. The design synthesis

proposes a point of view and problem definition to which a final concept idea is presented as a solution. The outcome and methodology are evaluated critically and future research directions are suggested. The thesis contributes to the discourse of e-democracy.

Keywords

service design, e-democracy, politics, practices

Department

Department of Media, Media Lab Helsinki

Program

MA in New Media

Supervisor

Rasmus Vuori

Advisor

Mia Muurimäki

Pages

104

Contents

Tiivistelmä	4
Abstract	5
Introduction	9
Design as a method for influencing positive social change	9
Objectives for this thesis	10
Personal agenda	11
Structure of this thesis	11
Democracy and the e-democracy project	13
The ideals of democracy	13
Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere	13
Chantal Mouffe's Agonistic Pluralism	14
E-democracy and the democratic potential of the Internet	17
First wave of e-democracy: the virtual Habermasian public spheres	17
The second wave: Social media and citizen-centered politics	19
Collective intelligence powered by the Internet	20
The future: In search of new opportunities for e-democracy	23
Methodology	26
Design research vs scientific research	26
Human-centered design	27
Design space	28
Cultural approach to design	29
Practice theory: designing for practices	31
Practices and opportunities in the design space	32
Practices and the adoption of new products and services	34
Practices and usability	35
Stakeholder mapping and participant recruitment	37
Benchmarking	38
Ideation	38
Interviews and design co-creation sessions	38
Design synthesis	40
Wireframes	41
Storyboards	42

Design exploration	44
Initial idea and inspiration	44
A Reddit for political ideas and their evaluation	45
Reflection on the idea	45
Key insights from benchmarking and literature review	47
Ideas taken to design co-creation sessions	48
Interview and co-design participants	54
Synthesis	55
Defining the problem(s)	55
Current practices of online political discussion	57
Co-creation: What I learned from working on my ideas with different people	60
Strategic direction from synthesis	60
Concept: “Get the big picture on current issues”	62
What is it?	62
Why do we need it?	63
Core idea: A post	64
Core idea: A topic	65
Crowd-sorting within a topic	66
Hotness of a post	67
Affinity-based sorting	68
Discussion within a topic	69
Front page	70
Who would use it and why?	71
Lauri’s story	72
Rewarding contributors	75
Conclusions	77
Discussion	77
Reflection	79
Final words	81
References	83
Appendices	87
Appendix A: Benchmarking	87
Appendix B: Interview Discussion Guide	92
Appendix C: Interview and co-design debriefs	94

Introduction

The world and the human race is facing unprecedented challenges in the coming years and decades. These come in the form of complex problems such as overpopulation, overconsumption, inequality, climate change, resource depletion, growing economic and political instability, just to name a few. These are issues which the free market has been notoriously bad at addressing. The issues require concerted political efforts to even begin to attempt to solve them. But it seems that politics is also in trouble. Citizens feel disaffected with politics and participation is waning. This thesis is an attempt to find ways of re-energizing the avenues for political participation. More specifically, it is an exploration of a potential service concepts that could help

facilitate better political discussion online using ideas of collective intelligence. As such, it contributes to the discourse of *e-democracy*.

Design as a method for influencing positive social change

Design as a discipline serves an important role in today's society. Coyne (2005) argues that design is uniquely positioned to help address

the “wicked problems” of society. These are problems that are difficult to define, which have no clear prescriptions for how to solve them, and generally involve problems so complex that any attempt at solving them will likely result in more problems and an uncertainty about whether the solution can even solve the original problem or not.

In his essay, Slavin (2016) puts forth the notion of “design as a form of participation in complex adaptive systems”. He argues that the new generation of designers who design the complex adaptive systems we use to interact with the world around us are more humble than the older generation of Modernist designers who de-

signed with an ultimate designer's vision of how the buildings, cars and chairs were supposed to be used – and often the only ways they *could* be used. In contrast, designers working in today's complex interconnected world of systems have a much humbler approach to their work. Slavin (2016) explains why:

The designers of complex adaptive systems are not strictly designing systems themselves. They are hinting those systems towards anticipated outcomes, from an array of existing interrelated systems.

Design and politics have something in common. Both include practitioners participating in the crafting, adjustment and evaluation of complex systems. In this sense design can also be seen as a political act of participation – and designers should be cognizant of the broader impact of their decisions. Slavin (2016) argues that the preoccupation of “user-centred design” with the needs of the individual user often ignores the broader group of stakeholders involved in the operation and execution of the designed service or product. Hence, focusing solely on the needs of the user can create designs that are detrimental to society and the other people involved who are not “users”.

Some contemporary work suggests that we are not only designing for participation, but that design is a fundamentally participatory act, engaging systems that extend further than the constraints of individual (or even human) activity and imagination.

This is design as an activity that doesn't place the designer or the user in the center.

(Slavin 2016)

In this thesis, my aim is to explore solutions that could serve the needs of the individual user as well as society as a whole. In the regular client work that I do in my professional life, I use human-centred design methods to understand users and explore solutions that are desirable to them but also technically feasible given the production facilities a client has at their disposal, and economically viable as justifiable business ventures that can turn a profit. In contrast to my regular work, this project has no commercial client whose business needs I would need to take into account. I'm doing this for myself. But given this freedom, I've decided that I want to do something that addresses bigger problems in society, bigger than turning a profit with a

new product or service. This is my attempt at participating in the design of complex systems as Slavin (2016) would have it. In this case the complex system is society and the avenue of approach for me is that I want to create something that could influence the ways in which we interact and converse around political issues.

Objectives for this thesis

This thesis is made up of two overlapping components:

- an exploratory design research project, and
- this thesis report detailing and reflecting on the design project.

The objective of the exploratory design research project is:

- To explore how online services could help facilitate and support better political discussion and democratic participation using mechanisms of collective intelligence.

The objectives of this report are:

- To situate the design project within relevant academic discourse.
- To detail the design methodology used, insights uncovered and design decisions made, or in other words, to tell the story of how the designs and design understanding evolved throughout the project.
- To reflect and evaluate the process, methods and design decisions made during the project in order to learn and develop design practice for the future.

Personal agenda

Personally, I began this project because I felt a need to help improve the democratic system. The world of entertainment, consumerism and consumption-fuelled identity politics seems to be taking primacy over democratic participation and political activity. Digitalisation is a trend that's making it easier and easier to participate in society as a consumer. Commercial interests have a solid economic incentive to facilitate and continue this trend. In contrast, digitalisation has been slow to influence the ease of participating in society as an active

citizen. There doesn't seem to be many entities or agents that are motivated or resourced to help develop new ways on of participating as a citizen. Public institutions are notoriously bad at innovating while private agents do not have an economic incentive to invest in these less commercial but societally important projects. Hence, as I get to choose the topic of my thesis, I'd like to invest my time and resources to this project and try to find ways of how new media technologies and design can help raise interest in societal issues and help bring participatory citizenship into the digital age.

Structure of this thesis

In the next section, I will selectively review academic discourse on theories of democracy and the concepts of e-democracy and collective intelligence. In addition to reviewing academic literature, I will review and benchmark earlier works and designs in the fields. The section ends with an initial direction for the design work. The evolution of this direction is documented throughout the design process.

The methodology section will describe the process, tools and methods through which the design work is done. It will focus solely on describing what has been done and how. The results of each method will be presented in the following section.

The results section will explain evolution of designs under consideration as well as the results from the applied methods. Concepts, theories and ideas from literature, design practice and intuition will be included where applicable, especially in the design synthesis phase. The results section ends with a proposed solution to the problem identified in the synthesis.

The conclusion section will finish with some final words regarding the thesis. It will evaluate the process, methods, results and contribution of the project. It will outline future development plans for the ideas developed in the thesis as well as suggest future research topics regarding e-democracy as well as human-centred design and service design methodology.

Democracy and the e-democracy project

In the following section, I will briefly review two select academic theories of democracy as well as the concepts of e-democracy and collective intelligence. This is by no means an exhaustive review of previous work in these discourses but rather a selected review of interesting work that has inspired my design work and been useful for my purposes. The section ends with an explanation of the initial direction I took for the design work.

The ideals of democracy

To develop services and platforms that can enhance democracy and democratic deliberation, it's important to understand what the requirements of democracy are. Next, I will outline two notable theories of liberal democracy and their implications for this project: Jurgen Habermas' concept of *deliberative democracy* and the

public sphere as well as a critique and alternative to Habermas' thinking proposed by Chantal Mouffe called *Agonistic Pluralism*.

Jurgen Habermas and the Public Sphere

Jurgen Habermas and his concept of a "public sphere" is one of the most referenced ideas when talking about democracy and political discussion. In short, Habermas' idea of a public

sphere refers to a public environment for political deliberation, consisting of the mass media people consume as well as other public spaces for discussion, such as public houses and town halls.

According to Habermas, the public sphere is central to a democracy because it's where citizens can discuss and deliberate on political issues. Habermas believes in the power of deliberation - meaning prolonged and rational debate - as the requirement for informed political positions and decisions. This idea is the foundation of his theory of democracy, called "deliberative democracy". (Habermas 1995)

Seyla Benhabib (1996, p. 69) describes deliberative democracy this way:

According to the deliberative model of democracy, it is a necessary condition for attaining legitimacy and rationality with regard to collective decisions making processes in a polity, that the institutions of this polity are so arranged that what is considered in the common interest of all results from processes of collective deliberation conducted rationally and fairly among free and equal individuals.

Benhabib goes on to describe the features of deliberation (1996, p. 70):

- 1. Participation in such deliberation is governed by the norms of equality and symmetry; all have the same chance to initiate speech acts, to question, interrogate, and to open debate;*
- 2. All have the right to question the assigned topics of conversation;*
- 3. All have the right to initiate reflexive arguments about the very rules of the discourse procedure and the way in which they are applied or carried out. There are no prima facie rules limiting the agenda or the conversation, nor the identity of the participants, as long as each excluded person or group can justifiably show that they are relevantly affected by the proposed norm under question.*

Habermas' ideas have received much attention and defined the deliberative democracy paradigm of liberal democracy. However, the ideas have also had its critics. In the next section, I will review Chantal Mouffe's critique of Habermas' ideas of deliberative democracy and present her alternative theory: Agonistic Pluralism.

Chantal Mouffe's Agonistic Pluralism

Chantal Mouffe is one of the most prominent critics of Habermas' theory of deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy grounds its legitimacy on rationality; through discussing our common issues together in a rational way, we can come to a consensus on how to best deal with them (Mouffe 1999). According to Mouffe (1999), this means making an essential distinction between "mere agreement" and "rational consensus." Furthermore, the values of the procedure, impartiality and equality, openness (no one and no relevant information is excluded), lack of coercion, and unanimity follow from this distinction. Taken together, these should guide the discussion and deliberation towards generalisable interests to the agreement of all participants, and this would produce legitimate outcomes. Mouffe (1999, p. 748) explains:

the process of public discussion can be guaranteed to have reasonable outcomes only to the extent that it realizes the conditions of ideal discourse: the more equal and impartial, the more open that process is and the less participants are coerced and ready to be guided by the force of the better argu-

ment, the more likely truly generalizable interests will be accepted by all persons relevantly affected.

Mouffe identifies the crux of Habermas's theory: whether the requirements of the "ideal discourse" can ever be attained. Drawing on Wittgenstein's philosophical notions of practice, Mouffe challenges the very idea of neutral or rational dialogue. She writes (1999, p. 749):

For Wittgenstein to have agreement in opinions there must first be agreement on the language used and this, as he points out, implies agreement in forms of life. According to him, procedure only exists as a complex ensemble of practices. Those practices constitute specific forms of individuality and identity that make possible the allegiance to the procedures. It is because they are inscribed in shared forms of life and agreements in judgements that procedures can be accepted and followed. They cannot be seen as rules that are created on the basis of principles and then applied to specific cases. Rules for Wittgenstein are always abridgements of practices, they are inseparable of specific forms of life.

Therefore, distinctions between "procedural" and "substantial" or between "moral" and "ethical" that are central to the Habermasian approach cannot be maintained and one must acknowledge that procedures always involve substantial ethical commitments.

What Mouffe (1999) is saying is that the rules and procedures that we ascribe to in discussing and deliberating political issues are inseparable from the substantial content of the discussion. This means that by requiring a "rational debate that concerns the interests of all involved" is actually saying something about the values from which speakers are able to draw moral authority from - and ultimately something other than value-free or "neutral".

Mouffe (1999) also challenges the very possibility of the "ideal speech situation" conceived by Habermas as the asymptomatic ideal of intersubjective communication free of constraints, where participants arrive at consensus by means of rational argumentation. She explains (p. 751):

Indeed a Lacanian approach reveals how discourse itself in its fundamental structure is authoritarian since out of

the free-floating dispersion of signifiers, it is only through the intervention of a master signifier that a consistent field of meaning can emerge. As Žižek shows (1992, Chapter 3), for Lacan the status of the master signifier, the signifier of symbolic authority founded only on itself (in its own act of enunciation) is strictly transcendental: the gesture that "distorts" a symbolic field, that "curves" its space by introducing a non-founded violence in stricto sensu correlative to its very establishment. This means that if we were to subtract from a discursive field its distortion, the field would disintegrate, "de-quilt." Lacan undermines in that way the very basis of Habermasian view, according to which the inherent pragmatic presuppositions of discourse are non-authoritarian, since they imply the idea of a communication free of constraint where only rational argumentation counts.

In sum, Mouffe's (1999) critique of Habermasian deliberative democracy focuses on the impossibility of the "ideal speech situation" that is at the centre of the deliberative approach. She suggests an alternative theory for democratic

politics:

I want to stress that what is really at stake in the critique of “deliberative democracy” that I am proposing here is the need to acknowledge the dimension of power and antagonism and their ineradicable character. By postulating the availability of public sphere where power and antagonism would have been eliminated and where a rational consensus would have been realized, this model of democratic politics denies the central role in politics of the conflictual dimension and its crucial role in the formation of collective identities. This is why it is unable to provide an adequate model of democratic politics. (Mouffe 1999, p. 752)

Mouffe continues, explaining how power and hegemony shape social objectivity:

*On contrary, this question of power and antagonism is precisely at the center of the approach that I want to put forward and whose theoretical bases have been delineated in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). What we attempted*

to do in that book was draw out all the consequences for a radical conception of democracy of the ineradicability of power, of antagonism, and of the fact that there can never be total emancipation but only partial ones. This means that the democratic society cannot be conceived any more as a society that would have realized the dream of a perfect harmony or transparency. Its democratic character can only be given by the fact that no limited social actor can attribute to herself the representation of the totality and claim in that way to have the “mastery” of the foundation. the central thesis of the book is that social objectivity is constituted through acts of power. This implies that any social objectivity is ultimately political and that it has to show the traces of exclusion that governs its constitution. The point of convergence — or rather mutual collapse — between objectivity and power is precisely what we mean by “hegemony.” (1999, p. 752)

For Mouffe (1999), therefore, politics is not about “defending the rights of preconstituted identities but rather in constituting those iden-

ties themselves in a precarious and always vulnerable terrain” (p. 753, emphasis added):

*The approach that I am advocating involves a displacement of the traditional relations between democracy and power. For the Habermasian vision of “deliberative democracy,” the more democratic a society is, the less power would be constitutive of social relations. But if we accept that relations of power are constitutive of the social, then **the main question of democratic politics is not how to eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power that are compatible with democratic values.** To acknowledge the existence of relations of power and the need to transform them, while renouncing the illusion that we could free ourselves completely from power, this is what is specific to the project of “radical and plural democracy” that we are advocating.*

Mouffe’s (1999) “agonistic pluralism” is about embracing the passion that comes from defending one’s social identity within the struggles of “the political”. To her, democratic politics is

about fighting without violence. She explicates:

Hence, the importance of distinguishing between two types of political relations: one of antagonism between enemies, and one of agonism between adversaries. We could say that the aim of democratic politics is to transform an “antagonism” into an “agonism.” This has important consequences for the way we envisage politics. Contrary to the model of “deliberative democracy,” the model of “agonistic pluralism” that I am advocating asserts that the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions nor to relegate them to the private sphere in order to render rational consensus possible, but to mobilise those passions towards the promotion of democratic designs. Far from jeopardizing democracy, agonistic confrontation is in fact its very condition of existence. (Mouffe 1999, p. 755)

Thus far I have reviewed two notable and alternative theories of the ideals of democratic politics. Habermasian *deliberative democracy* highlights the importance of rational deliberation and consensus within the public sphere

among all involved parties as a precondition of legitimate political decisions of the common good. In contrast, Mouffe’s *agonistic pluralism* sees the conditions of a Habermasian “ideal speech situation” impossible in reality, as our social identities are forged in the passionate opposition to hegemonic forces. In “agonistic pluralism”, passion and conflict create the social identities that can become empowered around political aims. Mouffe sees this conflict as inherent and necessary in politics and the political. I’ve reviewed these two theories of liberal democracy because it is important to understand the theoretical ideals of democratic politics to be able to evaluate the ideas and directions that the creative design process will produce. These two perspectives on democracy inspired my design work and attempts at making sense of the complexity of political discussion.

E-democracy and the democratic potential of the Internet

In the following section, I will briefly review the

project of e-democracy, explaining its history and reviewing select projects and activities related to it. This thesis aims to contribute to the discourse of e-democracy.

First wave of e-democracy: the virtual Habermasian public spheres

The first wave of e-democracy was strongly inspired by Habermas’ concept of a deliberative public sphere. Loader & Mercea (2011) describe the first wave of e-democracy projects as being enamoured with ideas of a virtual Habermasian public sphere. These projects were powered primarily by e-mail, Usenet, and web-based forums for deliberation (Wilhelm 2000; Dahlberg 2001a).

Dahlberg (2001a) has proposed a set of ideal requirements for Habermasian public sphere deliberation on the Internet. He describes the requirements for “rational-critical discourse” (p. 622) as follows:

- *Exchange and critique of reasoned moral-practical validity claims.* Deliberation involves engaging in reciprocal critique of normative positions that are provided with

reasons rather than simply asserted.

- *Reflexivity.* Participants must critically examine their cultural values, assumptions and interests, as well as the larger social context.
- *Ideal role taking.* Participants must attempt to understand the argument from the other's perspective. This requires a commitment to an ongoing dialogue with difference in which interlocutors respectfully listen to each other.
- *Sincerity.* Each participant must make a sincere effort to provide all information relevant to the particular problem under consideration including information regarding intentions, interests, needs, and desires.
- *Discursive inclusion and equality.* Every participant affected by the validity claims under consideration is equally entitled to introduce and question any assertion whatsoever. Inclusion can be limited by inequalities from outside of discourse - by formal or informal restrictions to access. It can also be limited by inequalities within discourse, where some dominate discourse and others struggle to get their

voices heard.

- *Autonomy from state and economic power.* Discourse must be driven by the concerns of publicly-oriented citizens rather than by money or administrative power.

The aforementioned requirements, according to Dahlberg (2001a), outline characteristics through which to measure the extent to which a certain environment exemplifies a virtual Habermasian public sphere.

In considering these requirements, it's important to note that the critics of Habermas's public sphere idea have mostly had issue with the idea of "rational discourse" as a requirement. For example, Fraser (1990) underlines how speaking up is not about defending the interests of a certain social identity – as Habermas might put it – but rather it is the act through which this social identity is created. Mouffe (1999) also sees politics as the struggle to have a social identity to begin with - and sees that the "rational argumentation" underlined by Habermas is another way of excluding certain identities from having a voice and ultimately – a political existence. Hence, limiting the ways in which people are allowed to express their opinions is probably not a good idea if one wants to create something

that allows everyone to truly be themselves.

Dahlberg (2001a) goes on to examine how these ideal requirements were met in the forums for the centre of Minnesota E-Democracy in a previous study by Dahlberg (2000; 2001b).

Example: Minnesota E-Democracy (e-democracy.org)

The Minnesota E-Democracy project is an example of the challenges of forums designed to elicit Habermasian "rational-critical" deliberation. Dahlberg (2001) claims that the Minnesota E-Democracy project was able to shape on-line deliberation in such a way as to overcome many of the limitations of other less structured "cyber-forums" and is thus able to "more effectively extend the public sphere" (p. 624). This was achieved through "the use of e-mail lists, the formalization of rules and guidelines, the careful management of the forum, the development of self-moderation, and the focus on issues located within a geographically bounded political jurisdiction." However - as even Dahlberg (2001) himself admits, - the discourse still did not meet the ideal requirements he defined for rational-critical discourse. For example, participation was both quantitatively and qualitatively dominated by those already powerful

offline (e.g. politically active, educated, white, males) (Dahlberg 2001a).

The virtual Habermasian public sphere models also struggle to maintain interest in an online environment of social networking. In addition to being limited to a certain active demographic segment, it's clear that competing interests for users' attention made the overall user base limited, as Dahlberg (2001a, p. 628) concedes:

Unfortunately, Minnesota E-Democracy, along with other online deliberative forums, threatens to be marginalized by commercialized and privatized forms of participation. Online deliberative forums also have to compete for attention with less demanding forms of political engagement - common interest groups that support and promote particular interests and liberal individualist projects where participants can download information and directly express their views. Indications are that deliberative forums are losing this competition. Even when deliberative options are available, most people are not interested in participating in them.

It seems that merely offering people a place to

rationally discuss political issues hasn't managed to gain popular interest and adoption. However, Dahlberg (2001a, p. 629) suggests we should not give up yet: "New deliberative models and technologies need to be developed to attract an online public being offered ever more seductive and easily consumable options." In this sense, however the new virtual public sphere manifests itself, it will need to be interesting to more than just the rational political deliberators drawn to the strictly Habermasian projects.

But it is probably safe to say that the problems with political discussion are not limited to the available technological resources and tools. Dahlberg (2001a, p. 630) finds that the issue is with culture and attitudes in general:

The public sphere will not be extended merely through the diffusion of a new technological artefact. People must be drawn into rational-critical discourse before new technologies can be successfully employed to extend the public sphere. As Barber (1998: 261-3) notes, the application of new technologies within societies dominated by commercial and individualist values and 'thin' models of democratic par-

ticipation will more than likely 'produce the same uncivility and cynicism that characterize politics in the older technologies, radio and television, for example. . . If the technology is to make a political difference, it is the politics that will first have to change'. (Dahlberg 2001a, p. 630)

We can only expect the problem of lack of attention for deliberative forums to have increased from the time of Dahlberg's (2001a) analysis with the advent of commercial social media services such as Youtube, Twitter and Facebook. An elitist, marginalized and demographically unrepresentative deliberative public sphere loses its democratic legitimacy (Dahlberg 2001a). However, the massively popular new social media services have effectively lead us into the second wave of e-democracy, which I will briefly outline next.

The second wave: Social media and citizen-centered politics

The second wave of e-democracy is characterised by the advent of social media and social network platforms. These include Facebook,

Twitter, Youtube, Wikipedia, and the blogosphere. It displaces the ‘public sphere’ model with that of a networked citizen-centered perspective providing opportunities to connect the private sphere of political identity to a multitude of chosen political spaces. (Loader & Mercea 2011)

Loader & Mercea (2011) explicate on the key difference between the second wave of e-democracy compared to the first:

It thus represents a significant departure from the earlier restricted and constrained formulations of rational deliberation with its concomitant requirement for dutiful citizens. In its place is a focus upon the role of the citizen-user as the driver of democratic innovation through the self-actualized networking of citizens engaged in lifestyle and identity politics. (Loader & Mercea 2011, p. 758)

The studies relating to the second wave of e-democracy seem to mainly focus on the political phenomena within the big social platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. Seeing the potential of these platforms for political or democratic activity requires a new way of un-

derstanding what we mean by democracy and politics. Loader & Mercea (2011, p. 761) explain:

While clearly a cause for concern for those optimists wishing that more of their fellow citizens would join them in political discussions online, should we conclude that the everyday use of social media has limited potential for democratic innovation? In part, the answer to the question depends upon what we regard as democratic activity. If we move beyond the traditional engagement with mainstream politics, such as voting, party membership, petitioning representatives and the like, and adopt a more open conception of democratic citizenship, a different focus and set of questions emerge. Those which are more attuned to the potential changing perceptions of citizens less inclined to be dutiful and open instead to a more personalized and self-actualizing notion of citizenship. An approach that does not valorize the more rigid one-dimensional political identities of previous times but instead recognizes the multiplicity of identity positions that citizens are required to grapple with in contempo-

rary societies, where the spheres for democratic engagement reach into the private spaces to enable the personal to become political (Squires, 1998). In this framework, it may be possible to interpret the democratic potential of social media in a new light.

What Loader & Mercea (2011) seem to be suggesting is that we need to understand politics and democratic activity in a broader sense to appreciate the potential of social media and the ways in which political activity manifests itself in the digital realm. To build on this thought, I will next introduce the concept of collective intelligence on the Internet. It is one potential avenue through which to explore and exploit the possibilities for political activity on the Internet.

Collective intelligence powered by the Internet

Collective intelligence is a concept that’s gained increasing interest with the advent of the Internet. Malone et al. (2009, p. 2) define *collective intelligence* broadly as “groups of individuals doing things collectively that seem intelligent”. While by this definition, it could include most

of organised human action and practice, they focus primarily on the interesting effects the Internet and ICT have had on the possibilities of collective intelligence. The phenomenon has also been described with terms such as radical decentralization (Malone 2004), crowd-sourcing (Howe 2008), wisdom of crowds (Surowiecki 2004), peer production (Benkler 2006), and wikinomics (Tapscott & Williams 2006).

The study of the collective capacity and performance of groups to work together to solve problems has only recently been taken up for research. In this vein, Woolley et al. (2010) studied 699 people working in groups of two to five. They found that a collective intelligence factor or “c factor” – similar to the general intelligence factor of individuals – could be identified and explains a group’s performance on a wide variety of tasks. Interestingly, they found that the average or maximum individual intelligence of group members was not significantly correlated with the group’s collective intelligence. In fact, the factors that were significantly correlated with the group’s collective intelligence were the average social sensitivity of group members, the equality in distribution of conversational turn-taking, and the proportion of females in the group. While this study was done with only a few people working together and actually

present in the same space and not virtually, it highlights the importance of the kind of interactions that together constitute the group’s collective intelligence.

Next I will review some notable examples of on-line collective intelligence platforms that have inspired and informed the work in this thesis.

Wikipedia

Wikipedia is “the free online encyclopedia that anyone can edit” (Wikipedia 2016). It is a great example of how crowds can cumulatively achieve something great for everyone. Only a very small percentage of its users are actually contributors and have made edits to the articles. However, since the end result is something useful, most people who have used the Internet or World Wide Web have also used Wikipedia. In terms of political issues, Wikipedia has solved the problem of factionalism by requiring citations to outside work. This means that when people disagree on a fact on Wikipedia, it comes down to the sources: only something that can be supported by outside sources can be included.

Reddit

Reddit’s slogan used to be “the front page of the

Internet”. At the moment of this writing, it’s “we power awesome communities”. Reddit is a great example of a collective intelligence platform that lends its structure to many different kinds of uses. At its core it’s about crowdsourcing and crowd-curating the best content on the Internet. The structure is one where the front page aggregates the hottest links from all the subreddits the user has subscribed to. A subreddit is a small community working to source content about a certain topic or theme. The content’s “hotness” is determined by an algorithm that considers the time that has elapsed since it was posted as well as the upvotes subtracted by downvotes it has received. Hence, the community adds the content and the community determines what is good content. The users can then enjoy the best curated content available. Each piece of content usually contains also interesting discussions in the comments. Reddit’s threaded discussions are also crowd-curated by upvoting and downvoting comments.

Reddit is great for cat pictures and funny, entertaining content and discussion. However, Reddit does not work well when it comes to controversial topics. This is because on Reddit, the majority can decide to hide unpopular ideas by downvoting them. If a comment gets more downvotes than upvotes, the algorithm

automatically hides it from other users. This leads to something which the community there describes as “the Reddit hivemind”. It means that the content and discussion on Reddit represents the majority of Reddit users. Officially downvoting should not be used for simply comments that one disagrees with but only if they do not contribute to the discussion. However, it appears that many people downvote things they disagree with and upvote things that they agree with. If there is a controversial topic that divides the community, the minority will easily get silenced by the majority. From a democratic perspective, this is less than optimal and could be described as a tyranny of the majority. This phenomenon could also be considered practical evidence for what Mouffe (1999) described as the problem of the “rational consensus” requirement of Habermasian deliberative democracy.

Quora

Quora is “the best answer to any question” (Quora 2016). It uses crowd-sourcing and crowd-curation mechanisms to source interesting questions around all sorts of topics. It also uses the power of crowds to find interesting people to answer the questions or interesting answers. It’s another great example of a collective intelligence platform where the structure provides

the mechanics and modes of interaction that guide the crowd towards a certain shared goal: interesting questions with interesting answers.

Quora is interesting in how it highlights the individual perspective each person is bringing to the discussion: Instead of the Habermasian ideal of suspending status hierarchies and discussing as peers, Quora actually underlines each person’s credentials in contributing to a specific question. For each person answering a given question, that person can explain his or her expertise in answering. This gives a better context to understand and interpret the answer and it’s relevance.

Next, I will introduce some previous work combining collective intelligence and politics:

DemocracyOS

DemocracyOS is a project that uses open-source technology and the blockchain to provide a platform that essentially functions as a digital version of democratic process. Any user can create a “democracy” for any purpose. Within these democracies, participants can propose motions, discuss them, and vote on them. The system is quite well designed but democracy and politics is not just about voting and making

proposals and deliberating on them. There is a broader world of politics and democracy that involves discussing issues and developing a shared understanding of things that is not included in the formal democratic process.

It’s hard to say if DemocracyOS is being used for its real purpose anywhere, because it is difficult to find a busy “democracy” on the platform. Most democracies seem to be tests by individuals. But at quick glance DemocracyOS seems to be suffering from the same problems as many of the virtual Habermasian public spheres of the first wave of e-democracy – like limited participation – and some new ones as well: since the system has integrated voting and users can actually craft proposals and vote on them, the system needs to achieve some kind of legitimate authority in a community for it to function properly. It’s a pretty big task. Nevertheless and despite its challenges, it is a great project that contributes to the e-democracy movement. If it hadn’t been done already, I might have been tempted to create something similar.

Brigade

Brigade is a mobile application that makes taking a position as easy as possible. Users are presented with position statements around all

kinds of political topics of their choosing. Users can then either agree or disagree with the positions, or if they can't decide, they can look at reasons why other people agree or disagree with the position. There is also an element of crowd-curation involved as users can upvote good reasons to agree or disagree, and the reasons are sorted based on the voting. Ultimately Brigade aims to connect people in a user's existing social networks who think similarly on positions so that they could take action together.

Brigade is an interesting development in the e-democracy project as it allows political participation with very low-effort interactions: users take positions just by swiping or pressing buttons, there isn't a need to type in or discuss issues. In fact, one of the shortcomings of Brigade is its lack of discussion. Users have no way of discussing or questioning someone's reasoning on why to agree or disagree on issues. It's likely a very deliberate design decision aimed to limit the amount of trolling, harassment, and questionable behavior on the platform.

Roust

Roust is a new social media platform that could be described as the "Facebook for politics". It seems to address the problem that on Facebook

it's sometimes considered a faux pas to begin a politically-motivated debate with people one is connected with. Roust creates an alternative environment, where people can post links into feeds similar to Facebook and debate them in the comments.

It will be interesting to see how Roust develops with time. Roust's current challenge is that it doesn't really appeal to people who are not already involved in politics. But in terms of connecting people who want to discuss and debate political topics, it appears promising.

Kansalaisaloite.fi

Kansalaisaloite.fi is a Finnish platform that is similar to the "We The People" petition system offered by the White House. Kansalaisaloite allows citizens to make proposals on potential changes to legislation and to support them. If a petition gets enough signatures, it will be taken to the Finnish Parliament for consideration. In Finland this process has successfully led to the adoption of gender-neutral marriage laws. This is also an important development in e-democracy. It offers a formal channel for citizens to influence the legislation considered in parliament.

The future: In search of new opportunities for e-democracy

With the advent of new communicative technologies, many people prefer to interact with others through the Internet and social media services. The significance of this for democracy should not be discounted. In a recent study, Christensen & Bengtsson (2011) studied the extent to which the Internet in Finland mobilizes citizens who are both willing and able to participate in political matters, but just happen to prefer alternative outlets for their political activity. Based on their analysis of the data from the Finnish National Election Study of 2007, they found some promising results for political activists who prefer the Internet. For example, 16% of their respondents indicated that they would not be active without the possibilities for participation offered by the Internet. This clearly suggests that the Internet has a substantial activating effect among people who would not be otherwise politically active. Christensen & Bengtsson (2011) found that those who preferred the Internet for their political participation were predominantly young and female. Furthermore, Christensen & Bengtsson (2011) found that those who were active in politics but preferred online to offline were at least as

competent in their political thinking as their counterparts who preferred offline political participation. Hence, we can say that the Internet has also positive democratic potential.

Traditional representative democracies are examples of collective intelligence systems. However, democracy and politics could do a better job at extending into the online world. The first generation of virtual Habermasian public spheres failed to gather broad adoption. The problem with the first wave was the rigid requirements for participation in the virtual Habermasian sphere and its concomitant inequality of participation. Now, many hopes are projected on to the power of social media to enhance democracy. The second wave is represented by social media services and the democratic and political participation afforded by the widely adopted platforms. New platforms specifically designed for political or democratic participation are also being developed with a broader mindset than the early virtual Habermasian public sphere. In this chapter, I've reviewed some interesting new developments combining collective intelligence mechanisms with political activity and democratic participation. Later in this thesis, I will look at the challenges presented by popular social media services and explore ideas that could facilitate

better political participation and involvement. Specifically, I'm interested in how we could harness the power of online crowds to facilitate pro-social political interactions online. In the following chapter, I will outline the methodology and designerly approach I use to explore these questions.

Methodology

In this section, I will explain my methodological and designerly approach for this thesis. First, I position my thesis as a design research project rather than a scientific research project. Then, I explain how my approach is philosophically grounded in human-centered design principles, introduce the useful concept of design space, and present my cultural approach to design: designing for practices. Finally, I finish this section with a write-up of the methods and practicalities I used during the design process. In the conclusions, I will evaluate the benefits and shortcomings of this methodological approach.

Design research vs scientific research

The methodological approach of the thesis project is that of design *not* science. It's important to note that while this thesis report is written as an academic paper, the methodological and philosophical underpinnings of the project are those of a design project. Stolterman (2008) argues that design and science are in some key ways fundamentally different both in their

goals and in their methods of addressing the complexity of the world, and the research methods used in interaction design should reflect an understanding of the nature of design practice.

Design practice is normally situated in a complex and messy context where the situation is not known well, with demanding and stressed clients, deadlines and limited resources. Designers who can manage this complexity and handle these situations are described as having a *designerly way* of thinking and acting (Cross 2001; Buxton 2007; Moggridge 2007). It is rig-

orous, but not in the same way as a scientific way of thinking and acting.

Design attempts to understand and frame problems in order to create working solutions to them. *Design complexity* is the complexity a designer experiences when faced with a design challenge including a goal, as well as limited time and resources (Stolterman 2008). Designers go on to make sense of the complexity of the challenge through designerly actions and abductive thinking (Kolko 2009). This process helps the designer to manage the complexity by taking a point of view, thereby adjusting the experienced difficulty of the problem at hand to create a state of mind conducive to productive and enjoyable work not unlike what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes as a state of *flow*.

The scientific approach to complexity is different to that of design practice. Stolterman (2008, p. 58) explains:

Complexity in Science has its place within all forms of scientific and research activities, and it influences our ability to explore, understand and explain reality as it is. Reality is, of course, of infinite complexity and may therefore never be fully explored or

understood. Time or resources do not, however, limit science as a project. Science is, if seen as a project, something humans will continue to work on forever, or as long as it takes, or as long as we are curious. The aim of science is to formulate universal knowledge that explains the complexities of reality on a level removed from specifics and particulars.

The difference between the designer's and scientist's approach to complexity denotes a fundamentally different methodology to developing knowledge or understanding of the world. The designer works within limited time, resources and towards producing something for a specific time and real-life context. On the other hand, scientists aim to produce universal knowledge through a rigorous, carefully prescribed and systematic process that at least shouldn't be subjected to time or resource constraints. In this respects, it's important to note that this project is a design project, where the process and methods are important only as far as they contribute to the design outcomes. In the following subsections, I will detail the specific methods and tools that I applied in the project.

Human-centered design

The design process of the project was crafted based on human-centered design principles and my prior design experience. My previous experience with design co-creation has led me to believe that by combining a more exploratory in-depth interviews approach with a one-on-one design co-creation session can fast track the exploration of any preliminary ideas together with potential users and other stakeholders.

Design and specifically user-centered or human-centered design methods are often employed to develop new product and service innovations. The terms “user-centered design” and “human-centered design” are often used interchangeably, so I will use the term “human-centered design” (HCD) in this thesis, as I believe it better represents the broad spectrum of potential human stakeholders for which products and services must be designed for or whose existence the designer should account for in the designs. Slavin (2016) captures the potential myopia of designers who design complex systems with only the mythical “user” in mind:

But as designers construct these systems, what of the systems that interact with those systems? What about systems of local commerce and the civic engagement that is predicated upon it? Or the systems of unions that emerged after generations of labor struggles? Or the systems that provided compensation for some reasonable number of artists? When designers center around the user, where do the needs and desires of the other actors in the system go? The lens of the user obscures the view of the ecosystems it affects.

The goal of human-centered design is to gain an understanding of the needs, perspectives, and sociocultural context of the human users and stakeholders of a given product or service, in order to better develop products and services that fit into and improve people's lives. To achieve this goal and to augment any existing information about the users and stakeholders (e.g. market research), a number of different research methods may be employed, such as interviews, surveys, experiments, and even more creative, projective techniques such as collage, card sorting or velcro modelling exercises.

Design space

This is an exploratory design research project intent on finding potential opportunities to improve the possibilities for democratic or political discussion online. In exploring and mapping these ideas the concept of “design space” is useful in representing the conceptual area under consideration in making design decisions.

The concept of “design space” has been the focus of recent design discourse. In his doctoral dissertation, Bo Westerlund (2009) studied the concept of design space and how it can help understand the design process. Another recent doctoral dissertation by Andrea Botero (2013), also further developed the notion of design space.

Westerlund (2009, p. 35) defines *design space* as:

design space is understood as all the possible design solutions that would work; that prospective users and other stakeholders would find meaningful. [...] Design space is the territory of all possible solutions.

In reality, mapping the design space exactly is impossible. The range of possible solutions is infinite. But as Westerlund (2009) notes, it's nevertheless a useful concept for design thinking. Design is different from science in that it attempts to develop a holistic understanding of a specific, context-specific situation and to create solutions within given resource limits - rather than expending unlimited resources in the pursuit of universal knowledge (Stolterman 2008). Therefore, design space functions as a conceptual tool for the designer-practitioner. It is a way to understand and conceptualise the universe of potential solutions and even to map it's most fruitful areas to focus on - given the limited time and resources available.

In this thesis project, I am exploring a given design space. It could be described as the design space related to e-democracy, political discussion, virtual Habermasian public spheres, collective intelligence, or the combination of the aforementioned. However, the exact words to define the design space are not important as the design space evolves during the design process. The design space can evolve as the exploration uncovers a better understanding of the myriad of interesting solutions and possibilities.

Initially, the process can be described

as exploratory, when one is uncertain about the design space. Here one wants to be surprised by the explorations. Later on in the process when one's knowledge has increased, the work tends to be more experimental; one is expecting to have one's assumptions confirmed or rejected. Observations, interviews, literature reviews, etc. that are conducted during the process also help to create an understanding of the design space. (Westerlund 2009, p. 35)

Territory

An understanding of the design space being explored can be developed using the metaphor of *territories*. These represent the different dimensions on which the value propositions of services, solutions, or the actions that they enable can exist. “Territory” is also a useful metaphor in the context of design exploration as it implies an area of exploration that can be explored in a variety of ways and using a variety of methods. Territory is a useful concept in that it also implies that the design space can be mapped. Mapping the design space of a project allows for a better strategic understanding of the possibilities for design practice. In this the-

sis, I use different methods to develop an understanding of the design space. These include an academic literature review, a benchmarking exercise, ideation, interviews and co-creation sessions with participants.

Opportunity areas

Opportunity areas are a conceptual tool for mapping the design space. If the design space is a theoretical mapping of all possible solutions, then opportunity areas are areas within that design space that can include many different kinds of solutions. Opportunity areas are typically expressed as “How might we” statements (HMW). These statements can quickly be written down when in an interview or co-creation session when a potential avenue for design exploration is discovered. For example, if an unmet need is observed in an interview, this can be written down as a “How might we” statement even if a specific solution to the problem might not be immediately apparent. The designer can later explore ideas that are inspired by the HMW.

Strategic design decisions

Another way I see the design space, its exploration and any designs within it evolving is through

a better understanding of the opportunities and limitations to what potential users would find meaningful or interesting given the cultural context. For example, the design research might provide an understanding of practices that suggest certain solutions that initially may have seemed feasible and interesting are in fact not interesting at all or not interesting enough to potential users. On the other hand, a better understanding of the cultural context might inspire completely new designs and directions for exploration. I will next outline my cultural approach to design practice and research.

Cultural approach to design

To understand the design space and especially the potential opportunity areas within it, it is important to be able to evaluate the likelihood that potential users would find a specific solution meaningful and interesting - and would actually use it. This is crucial because the number of possible solutions which constitute the design space is limitless. Depending on the stage of the process, this screening of potential solutions to focus on is done through either (1) using the de-

signer's understanding on what would be valued by the users, (2) through representations of the users and their motivations, such as *personas*, (3) through prototyping and user validation testing. All of the aforementioned ways would involve some kind of research - unless relying only on the designer's intuition or previous knowledge. Typically the designer employing a human-centered design approach will develop an understanding of the potential users through design research methods, such as observation, interviews or design probes.

In his seminal book "The Semantic Turn", Klaus Krippendorff (2005) suggests a paradigm shift in design practice and thinking: Designers should start looking at the meanings users give to the products and services they use. He suggests designers need to focus on designing things that make sense to their users, aid larger communities, and support a society that is getting more and more complex and interconnected. One of the key points is about looking at the cultural meaning and context in which the object of design will be embedded. This, I believe, can be best achieved through an ethnographic approach to design research practice.

In her articulation of the role of ethnographic methods in the design process, Wasson (2000)

traces how ethnography has come to be adopted by design firms. In short, before ethnography was adopted, the dominant social science paradigm was of cognitive psychology, primarily *human factors* research (e.g. Norman 1988). Besides physical ergonomics, this field of study is focused on "what kinds of products are the easiest to use, the most 'natural' for consumers, given the strengths and weaknesses of human information-processing capabilities" (Wasson 2000, p. 377). An example of this is Norman's (1988) famous gripe with door handles: How do we know whether to push or pull a door to open it? Some doors have handles that look like they could be pulled but are actually operated by pushing. This could be solved by designing doors that "afford" only one immediately logical way of operating. Push doors have no handle that could allude the user to believing they should be pulled open, etc.

While groundbreaking at the time, the cognitive psychology approach of human factors has been criticised for restricting itself to the study of what goes on "in the head" of the user. As a result, the way our consumption or use of products and services is embedded in larger institutional and cultural contexts remains largely ignored (Robinson 1993). Wasson (2000, p. 378) explains how ethnography appealed to

designers looking for a broader understanding of how people used their products:

Ethnography has been so intuitively appealing to designers (and their clients) because it promises to reveal a whole new dimension of 'the user'. It investigates, not just what consumers say they do, but what they actually do. From the beginning, ethnographic studies showed major discrepancies between designers' intended uses of their products and consumers' everyday behaviors. Such discoveries had a strong impact on the design field, highlighting the importance of learning about product use 'in the wild.' (Wasson 2000, p. 378)

Wasson (2000) highlights the need to understand how products are *actually* used 'in the wild'. But by understanding the cultural context of a *potential product*, designers can better evaluate the potential fit of the product within the cultural milieu. This is where an understanding of culture and ethnographic research becomes valuable. I argue that practice theory is a useful theoretical lens through which to understand and evaluate the likelihood that potential users would find a certain solution meaningful and

useful. Next, I will briefly introduce this theory.

Practice theory: designing for practices

Practice theory is a social theory presented by Schatzki (1996) that draws on philosophical notions put forth by scholars such as Giddens, Bordieau, Foucault, Butler and Latour (Reckwitz 2002). It has recently gathered increasing interest in the study of consumption culture (Warde 2005) and media studies (Couldry 2004). As such, practice theory provides a theory of culture and the social. What is here meant by “culture and the social” is the academic understanding of culture: the way people make sense of the world around them and the social forces that guide their behaviour.

In this sense, practice theory can be seen as an alternative to other theories of the social. In many other theories of culture, culture is approached as texts and categories that disseminate through social interaction. This means that most cultural analysis - for example conducted by social anthropologists or consump-

tion researchers - is focused on the analysis or “readings” of these texts or symbolic meanings attached to cultural objects and rituals. In contrast, practice theory takes a single “practice” as the unit of analysis, focusing more on what people actually do rather than symbolic meanings. This focus on doing - especially routine doing - is the most distinguishing characteristic of practice theory. For a more thorough comparison of practice theory within the field of social theories, see Reckwitz (2002).

What is a practice then? Schatzki (1996) identifies two important notions of practice:

1. a practice as “a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings” (Schatzki 1996, p. 89).

Examples are cooking practices, voting practices, industrial practices, recreational practices, and correctional practices. To say that the doings and sayings forming a practice constitute a nexus is to say that they are linked in certain ways. Three major avenues of linkage are involved: (1) through understandings, for example, of what to say and do; (2) through explicit rules, principles, precepts, and

instructions; and (3) through what I will call ‘teleoaffective’ structures embracing ends, projects, tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions, and moods.” (Schatzki 1996, p. 89)

2. a practice as performance. This refers to the carrying out of the “doings and sayings” mentioned in the former notion. Through actually performing the practice and its “doings and sayings”, it is sustained through the repeated, routinized performance. In this sense, the meanings associated with a certain doing (the notion of practice as a spatiotemporal nexus) can evolve through reflection and learning.

To summarise, practices are both the actual *doing* (performance) and the associated *meanings, skills and understanding* (nexus) related to a certain doing. Practices are also hierarchical, so that more specialized practices can involve specific adaptations of more common practices. In the example of cooking, this would mean that the practice of *cooking* consists of both the routine actions (performance) that go into preparing the food as well as the understandings and engagements (nexus) that relate to cooking, e.g. that cooking allows me to feed myself and people I care about, that spaghetti should be left a little al-dente to avoid over-

cooking, or that one must always wash hands before preparing to cook food.

What is then the role of the person who is doing the practice? The individual agent is the carrier of the practice (Reckwitz 2002). No one performs practices identically but rather there is a great deal of variation in how people carry out practices even though we can call it the same practice. As people develop through experience, they move from beginners to experts within a practice. People can also develop varying orientations within a practice as they apply their personalities and creativity to the practice; some are generalists while some are specialists within a practice, for example.

Practices spread among agents through processes of socialization (Schatzki 1996). For example, trendy fashion practices spread from one agent to another through the performance (wearing a style of fashion) and the appropriation (seeing, learning, and replicating) of the fashion trend by other agents. Educational institutions and influential opinion leaders play a big part in how and what kind of practices spread.

A key point about how practice theory relates to design is that the use of a product or a service is never a practice in itself but always a moment

in a practice (Warde 2005). This means that wants and needs for a product are a result of the agent “carrying” a specific practice but not necessarily having the material resources (i.e. the product) that the practice prescribes or entails. Therefore designers should think about what the practice is or what would be the practices that this product would support or be an essential part of.

Now that I have briefly explained the basics of practice theory, you may be wondering what practice theory can offer for design. Practice theory can contribute to design thinking and practice in at least three ways:

- 1) practice theory is a useful analytical tool to understand the cultural context of potential solutions,
- 2) practice theory can help in understanding and designing for how new products are adopted into everyday use,
- 3) practice theory offers a perspective on usability and the “intuitiveness” of certain design decisions.

In the next section, I will elaborate on each point and provide some hypothetical examples.

Practices and opportunities in the design space

Designers are often tasked with improving an existing product. For example, a manufacturing company might approach a design firm to seek out opportunities to increase the sale of a bike they are producing. To address this objective, the designers could use ethnographic research methods to gain an understanding of the current state of (the practice of) biking. And while I use the singular, the implication is that there are many ways to “do biking” – and those practices evolve constantly as the agents who carry them develop them through creativity. Ethnographic research into the current state biking could inform the designers of new ways and reasons for biking that are not adequately supported by the existing bike model and design against these insights to develop a new product for sale.

In this kind of ethnographic design research, practice theory provides a useful conceptual tool for analysis. Considering the notion of a practice as a performance, one could study the routine and repeated *performance* of biking: What goes on during biking? Is there any way of streamlining this performance? Are there some ad hoc workaround solutions that biking

enthusiasts have developed for solving their problems, and could they be integrated into the bike design? Then, considering the notion of practice as a nexus of “sayings and doings”, one could study the *engagements* related to “biking”: Why do we bike? What are we feeling when we bike? Why do people love biking? What keeps them biking? Or the *procedures* of biking: What kind of rules or procedures exist for biking? Are they clearly accounted for in the designs? Do changes in the explicit procedures offer opportunities for new design concepts? Also, one could consider the implicit *understandings* related to biking: What are the unwritten rules, skills and ways of talking about bikes that are interesting? Finally, since practices are patterns of routinized behavior and the attached meanings, just focusing the analysis on the patterns of behavior - rather than a specific individual and his or her preferences - can be a fruitful perspective for producing valuable design insights and shifting the focus from one individual to a practice undertaken by many.

Similar ideas have been expressed by Norman (2005) in his thinking around Activity-based design and Botero (2013) in her conceptualisation of design space. Norman (2005) argues that a focus on the user can in fact be detrimental for design practice when too much focus is put on

the specific and idiosyncratic needs of a smaller and smaller user group – at the expense of the strong vision and ability of designers to think of how things could be. In this sense I agree with Norman (2005). Designer’s should aim to influence cultural practices through the artefacts, products and services they create. And to do this, designers need to understand the cultural practices that are relevant for the project. Luckily, most designers do this naturally and intuitively. But practice theory provides a useful conceptual tool for developing a more rigorous and explicit understanding. In her doctoral dissertation, Botero (2013) highlights how the goal of design activities is to influence the practices that guide behavior of potential users:

It is change in the everyday practices that is the targeted outcome of design, and those practices by their nature intertwine systems that are simultaneously affected by other developments aside from design.
(Botero 2013, p. 84)

These other developments are what Botero (2013) describes as the *design space*:

the interplay of possibilities, practices, partly assembled technologies,

developing competencies, and social arrangements that are the basis for ongoing design choices and experimentation at multiple levels of engagement.
(Botero 2013, p. 84)

Botero’s (2013) work involves extended engagements with a particular social setting and participants, whereby the designs are developed and “aged together” with the everyday practices of use by the participants and further developed through various design activities. While the scope of this thesis does not allow for extended engagements with participants, I believe that the work in developing this concept further would benefit from this approach. It is especially relevant in this case of a collective intelligence platform, where the collective practices of a community are the targeted outcome of design activities. In my design work, I can only put forth preliminary ideas for designs that could accommodate particular practices I would hope to see develop. But only through experimentation and putting forth some kind of working prototype could it be seen if such practices come to be. If people start using the service, it would without doubt require further adjustment to fit the evolving practices of use by the community.

Practices and the adoption of new products and services

Practice theory is relevant in understanding and developing successful new innovations. In creating new commercially successful innovations, one of the key challenges is not only creating something that provides value to the user but to create something that creates value for the user *and* becomes widely adopted. This transition from being a new product only used by a few curious early adopters to one that is used by the mainstream majority of a given field is perilous and most new products introduced to the market ultimately do not make it (Moore 2002). Those that do, can be called successful innovations.

While this could traditionally be thought of as a job for *marketing*, designers play a key role in the adoption of innovations. Besides just creating aesthetically beautiful and easy to use products and services, designers practicing the human-centered design approach need to think of what kind of a design will become broadly adopted. Wasson (2000) explains:

Designers also regard their work as an act of communication regarding the product's intended use. A suc-

*cessfully designed item is one that is easily adopted by consumers. This may be because the product's use **fits with existing behavior patterns or because it signals a new use in a clear and compelling way.** (Wasson 2000, p. 377, emphasis added)*

Practice theory helps in developing new innovative services by offering a way of understanding how new routines and ways of doing things are born (and in the process, how are new innovations adopted). If no similar product has ever existed, then it is a necessity to introduce a completely new way of doing things to the market - and this is known to be difficult. For example, Shove & Pantzar (2005) have used practice theory to study the invention, commercialisation, and adoption of Nordic walking, a new outdoor activity that has recently gained much popularity. Nordic walking is the outdoor pastime that involves something akin to speed walking using poles similar to the kind that are used in skiing. What Pantzar & Shove (2005) found out was that while it appears as if Nordic walking was invented somewhere and then spread to other countries, in fact the practice of Nordic walking was “re-invented” in different countries through an active process of integrat-

ing images seen in advertising and available artifacts (products), as well as earlier practices.

In addressing this issue, we conclude that practices and associated cultures of consumption are always ‘home-grown’. Necessary and sometimes novel ingredients (including images and artifacts) may circulate widely, but they are always pieced together in a manner that is informed by previous and related practice. What looks like the diffusion of Nordic walking is therefore better understood as its successive, but necessarily localized, (re)invention. (Shove & Pantzar 2005, p. 43)

In short, the new practice of Nordic walking evolved from other related practices with the help of institutions (training programs), opinion leaders (trainers, instructors), as well as images (advertising) and artifacts (products). Furthermore, the meanings and relevant practices from which Nordic walking evolved were slightly different depending on the country of study. Hence, designers who are designing a novel product for which there isn't already a practice, should think about what are the “ingredients” for that practice to be “invented” by the users. For example, what earlier practices

can help guide the behavior of the new practice?

To illustrate my point, let's consider the example of LinkedIn. LinkedIn is an online business networking service. It offers a person the chance to create a public profile for their career persona, listing past work experience, education and other achievements. In addition, it allows users to connect and communicate with other users, and in this way, helps people stay in touch with their network of contacts. It's a novel service but so many people have adopted it and use it regularly. How is this?

I don't claim to know how LinkedIn was invented, but to illustrate this point, let's consider this hypothetical scenario of how it could have been conceptualized with a practice-oriented mindset: The founder has the idea of doing an online business networking service. She gets funding and a team together and they start planning what to include as features and how to design the service so that while it does something completely new, it will be easy to start using.

The designers in the team decide to do some quick ethnographic interviews related to - what they call - the practices of *business networking* and *career advancing*. Now these are existing practices and in fact the same practices that

LinkedIn helps out with. And as they conclude the research and finish mapping the practices, they discover that currently the people who they interviewed would do *business networking* and *career advancing* through giving out business cards, writing resumes, job applications, requesting recommendations from their previous managers, and staying in touch with their business network connections - just to know what they're working on. All of this is complemented with the insight that most of the time, the interesting job positions are not even advertised publicly. That the important understanding for career advancement is to be available and in people's minds when they consider hiring a person for a job.

Based on the ethnographic insights, the team decides to focus on supporting the *business networking* and *career advancement* practices with an online service that would help its users be available and in people's minds or at least easily searchable by providing public profiles. And since the service is based on content contributed by its users, the team decides to ensure that the service is easy to start using by enabling them to provide very similar content as they have already been writing. "It's like your online resume. It's the replacement for giving out business cards. It's like Facebook for business net-

working." The team communicates the service offering. By understanding the existing practices that the use of the service helps support or evolves from, the team can ensure that there is enough familiar parts to make it easy to start using and see the value. Even the simile "It's like Facebook for business networking" helps tie the service's use to a familiar earlier practice (e.g. social networking) - and so makes it easier to understand. Hence, designers aiming to craft successful and new innovative products or services need to consider how their users will adopt them into their routines. Or, to put it into practice terms: How will the practice that requires their product come to be? How will the users "invent" how to use it?

Practices and usability

Practice theory can also provide a perspective on usability and the "intuitiveness" of certain design decisions. Often, when people are talking about the usability of a given product, they speak of how "intuitive" or "natural" it is to use or interact with it. The Human Factors approach (e.g. Norman 1988) considers it a question of how the human mind processed the informational cues of the design that should only afford certain (correct) ways of using

them. But is “intuitiveness” of a given design a universal attribute of the design or a culturally situated interpretation of it? I argue that it is at least partly cultural.

To illustrate my point, consider this: Does our perception of what is usable or intuitive change over time? If an old Macintosh computer - praised during its time for its usability - was given to you to use, would it feel intuitive? And vice versa: If a new Apple iMac from today (2015) would be given to someone from 1990, would they think it's very intuitive or has great usability? I think the answer to both of these questions is at least partly a no. It might be difficult to let go of the metaphors and ways of using a computer that we're used to and that might lead to difficulties in using a very old computer.

As a counterpoint, someone could argue that usability can't be cultural because babies - who do not have the “cultural indoctrination” that older kids or adults have - can still easily play around with the Apple iPad or other devices that have great usability. I think in this kind of a case, a baby will actually learn or “invent” the necessary cultural practices of using the iPad without any previous experience. And the same goes for someone from 1990, if put before a brand new Apple iMac from 2015, it would depend on their

previous experience with Macintosh computers or computers in general. If there isn't much, they would probably develop the practice of using it quite fast. On the other hand, if they had extensive experience with the Macintosh from 1990, the iMac from 2015 could seem strange and confusing as its operation conflicts with their expectations of how it should work. To successfully operate the computer, it might require they relinquish their previous experience and - from a practice point of view - “unlearn” or “relearn” the practice of using a computer.

So how is this relevant for design practitioners?

“Usability best practices” or “design patterns” are the design “tropes” (to use a literary term) that guide the design of products and services, especially in the field of user interface design. By using repeated patterns, the design fits well with established practices of use. The result is a product that feels intuitive and natural. It is not because the products are inherently somehow natural to use but more so because the specific culturally situated subject (the user) interprets them as natural to use. This is because it uses common design patterns (e.g. dropdown menus, top navigation, drag & drop functionality) that the user has used in some other product or service and is familiar with.

In this chapter, I have introduced the basics of practice theory in relation to design. I have outlined three ways how practice theory and practices as a conceptual tool are useful in my design practice and thinking:

- 1) By providing a useful analytical concept for ethnographic design research and for uncovering the opportunities in a given design space,
- 2) By helping understand how new products and services are adopted by users, and
- 3) by providing a valuable, cultural perspective to usability.

In this project, I aim to *understand* and to *design for* practices and their subsequent evolution, hoping that I can influence the practices to evolve into something new and more constructive for democracy and political participation.

Stakeholder mapping and participant recruitment

Stakeholder mapping is a typical design method done in the early stages of the design project. It aims at identifying the different stakeholder groups relevant to the service project in question. In this project, I wanted to do the stakeholder mapping primarily to inform the participant recruitment.

Based on the stakeholder mapping, I drew up profiles of the kind of dimension I'd like to see vary in the participants. They were the following:

Approach to political participation. The most important criteria for recruitment was that I wanted to talk to people who approach politics from different angles. For this, the stakeholder mapping provided a valuable source. I wanted to interview politicians, political bloggers, political journalists and other members of the media, politically active citizens, not politically

active citizens, business owners, salaried employees, NGO workers and so on.

Political orientation. While most of my friends and networks share a green or liberal political orientation, I wanted to also meet and talk to people who would have differing world views. I felt this was one of the most interesting opportunities for me to get outside of my usual circle of like-minded connections. While most of the participants are voters or politicians for the green party, there is at least one participant (Tiina) who is from what could be described in many respects as the polar opposite of the green party: The Finns party, a right-wing conservative populist party.

Social media use. I wanted people who have differing approaches to social media. I also wanted people who are already active on social media so that I could understand the already existing practices of participation in political discussion. Von Hippel (xxxx) talks about *lead users* as

Gender. I wanted a good distribution of both male and female participants. While ultimately there didn't seem to be much difference in the kinds of responses I got from male compared to female participants, I wanted to ensure that I

had enough demographic diversity in the group of people I interviewed.

Age. To get a broad exposure to different kinds of life stages, I wanted to interview people of different ages. The youngest participant was 21 years old while the oldest was 37.

Recruitment was done through existing contacts to save time. In design practice, this is usually described as a "friends & family" recruitment strategy. Luckily enough, I have a fairly broad network of connections that I could ask to participate. However, for some desired roles – such as politicians and people who have very different political views from me – I reached out to people who I had not had previous contact with. E.g. Tiina, Lilja and Tuomas were reached either by contacting them directly without any previous connection or through asking friends for potential contacts that would fit a specific profile (e.g. political journalist).

When contacting potential participants, I introduced myself and the project goal (to explore service concepts that could facilitate better political discussion) and ask if they would like to participate in an interview as well as help evaluate and further develop early ideas I had on the topic. I told them the interview would

take about an hour or 1,5h maximum. After doing the first two interviews I discovered that to do the interviews properly I would need more than that so I told the participants of later interviews that it could take up to two hours - but always adjusted according to the needs of the interviewee. Before the interviews, I would also check if the participants were ok with me recording the interview and taking photographs. Most participants I contacted agreed to this.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking served an important two-fold purpose in this project. First, it was done to understand the existing work done within the design space. Second, it was done to inspire new kinds of thinking about potential solutions. For example, Quora has arguably not a lot to do with political discussion. However, Quora is a great inspirational benchmark because it represents a novel way of using mechanisms of collective intelligence to provide value to its community. On the other hand, DemocracyOS is an example of a project that was good to be aware of, because it was very close to an idea that I had initially had. But since I learned of DemocracyOS, I didn't have to explore that di-

rection by designing it myself but rather I could evaluate the solution already "in the field".

Benchmarks were gathered by the author during the project, primarily during a few weeks in the early phases. But some benchmarks were added even at later stages when I came across them. I also tapped into the Media Lab community and asked people for benchmarks. The documented benchmarks can be found in the appendices at the end of this document.

Ideation

Ideation refers to creatively coming up with ideas for a specific purpose. Ideation served an important purpose in the project at many different stages. After each method, I would spend time coming up with ideas, document them by sketching or writing on a post-it or on the laptop. I would try to come up with as many different ideas as possible to map out the design space. Sometimes I would even organise the ideas into groups and determine different opportunity areas from that. However, after each ideation session, I would typically choose the best idea or ideas to go forward with, discarding with ease the ideas that were not worth

exploring with the limited time and resources I had at my disposal.

Interviews and design co-creation sessions

Co-creation and co-design are growing advancements in the field of human-centered design. They are part of the participatory approach to design in which the potential users are recruited to be a part of the design work. Co-creation refers to any act of collective creativity. Co-design refers to collective creativity as it is applied across the whole span of a design process. (Sanders & Stappers 2008)

In this project, I wanted to employ design co-creation with the participants for a number of reasons. First, I knew I was designing a system that would need to accommodate different kinds of users, who would potentially use it for different reasons. I wanted to work on my ideas with these different people. Second, while I have some experience and interest in politics, I still consider myself quite distanced from the reality and diversity of political activity. Hence,



Figure 1. Exploring opportunities within a design space

Benchmarking

What solutions exist already

Ideation + Design co-creation

Potential solutions we can create

Practices

What people do and what kind of behaviors could we expect them to adopt with ease

the participants – who had varying approaches and roles within politics – could serve as my co-designers and subject matter experts, giving me perspectives on my work that I couldn't think of. Typically service design is never done alone, but in multi-disciplinary teams. This kind of solo thesis work is an exception, and I wanted to get outside perspectives on my work. Third, my professional experience from applying co-creation has taught me that design co-creation can fast track the exploration of ideas as they are immediately put to the test with potential users, and any problems that appear can be immediately fixed or at least attempted to fix.

For the interviews and co-creation sessions, I prepared (1) an interview discussion guide and (2) multiple co-creation assets printed on A4. These are attached in the appendices.

I aimed to conduct interviews with the participants followed by a design co-creation session in the same sitting. First, I would interview the participants about themselves and their practices. I would also talk about their thoughts about politics and political discussion online, especially any problems that annoy them or pose a threat to democracy. After the interview part, I would preface the design co-creation by explaining that I wanted to present some of my

ideas and wanted their help in developing them. I explicitly encouraged them to come up with new ideas and develop my ideas further, but also to voice their criticisms if they felt something would not work. After this, I would present each of the co-creation assets as stimuli one by one, taking time with each asset to discuss it and try to get my participants to comment or brainstorm around them. While this took longer than I had anticipated, it proved very useful. Sanders & Stappers (2008) outline the role of the user participating in a design co-creation session can vary depending on their interest and expertise from *doing* to *adapting* to *making* to *creating*. For most of the participants, it was at the least about *adapting* my ideas to suit them better, but many of the participants were comfortable in *creating* new ideas as well. These sessions were demanding for me facilitating them and making notes, but also very rewarding in terms of the ideas and perspectives that I got from working with different kinds of people.

Interviews were organised so that I would meet the participants in a location of their choice and convenience. I would ask if we could meet somewhere where the participant would typically spend their day, at home, in the workplace or at a favourite cafe or bar. This was to help understand more about the participant and

the context of their daily life. Most of the participants I interviewed in a cafe or a bar. Three participants I interviewed in their workplace. Two were interviewed in their home.

The interviews were documented and processed in multiple ways. I documented the interviews by taking photographs, recording the discussion audio, as well as taking notes during the interview. Due to limited time and previous experiences with design research, I did not transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews. But as soon as possible after each interview, I would have a debrief session where I would write up my notes and consider the learnings from the interview by creating a debrief document of the interview. These debrief documents can be found in the appendix. Due to this actively interpretive approach, the quotes in the debriefs or within this document are not word for word quotes from the interviews but rather my notes and synthesis of what I learned from the participants and their perspective.

Design synthesis

The synthesis phase is important in the design process as it helps the designer make sense

and gain a holistic understanding of the design space. The highly sought after intellectual value of design in general is that of “organizing complexity and finding clarity in chaos” (Kolko 2010, p. 15). This is typically done through synthesis, during which designers aim “to organize, manipulate, prune, and filter gathered data into a cohesive structure for information building” (Kolko 2007).

Sensemaking is a key part of synthesis. Klein et al. (2006, p. 71) describe sensemaking as a “motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively.” Kolko (2010) recommends that designers should externalise the meaning-creation process of synthesis. This is generally done by getting the available data “out of their heads” and onto a big wall where it can be reorganised in order to discover relationships between ideas and pieces of information.

In the design synthesis phase, I took all the information and observations I had gathered so far and put them up on large kapa boards. I printed the co-creation interview debriefs, the co-creation assets, the benchmarks, and put them all up on the boards. After this, I started to go through my interview notes and debriefs

to collect observations and thoughts on sticky notes which I attached to the kapa boards. Reviewing literature as well as the things I found on the internet also produced printouts and article pieces and put those on the kapa boards too.

Synthesis is an abductive sensemaking process. Abduction is a form of logical argumentation and thinking which Peirce (1998, p. 95) describes as the “step of adopting a hypothesis as being suggested by the facts . . . a form of inference.” Abduction is separate from induction and deduction, forms of logic more traditionally used in Western argumentation. Kolko describes the peculiarities of abduction:

Unlike deduction or induction, abductive logic allows for the creation of new knowledge and insight—C is introduced as a best guess for why B is occurring, yet C is not part of the original set of premises. And unlike deduction, but similarly true to induction, the conclusions from an abductive argument might turn out to be false, even if the premises are true. (Kolko 2010, p. 20).

This explains why abduction is essential to

design work. Designers struggle with limited resources of time and energy to solve a design challenge. Hence, they need logical tools to help make sense of the design space. Whether or not the synthesis produces scientifically verified truths is not the primary concern. The primary concern is to provide the designer with some kind of best guesses of explanations for what are the dynamics at play within a given scenario. Abduction is the formal mode of logic that allows the designer to also rely and trust his or her instinct and experience, to not be paralyzed with the uncertainty of reality.

Wireframes

The concept was illustrated using wireframe diagrams. Wireframes are used to illustrate the general layout of elements on a screen or interface. The idea is that they do not represent the final visual style of the application or service but serve only to illustrate the structure and visual hierarchy of the interface or layout. In this case, the wireframes are early conceptual wireframes. This means that they are not meant to represent any fixed pixel dimensions of elements.

Storyboards

Storyboards are a design method borrowed from the tradition of filmmaking. They depict an illustrated scenario of the use of the service across various interfaces and touchpoints. The storyboards used in this project were created digitally using the wireframe diagrams available and crafting new illustrations as necessary.

In this section, I have defined my methodology and designerly approach for the design exploration. In the following section, I will present the results of the design exploration.

Design exploration

In this section, I will detail the results of the design exploration, beginning with the initial inspiration and idea for the thesis, I will describe the ideas, observations, insights, and reflection that guided the design work throughout the project.

Initial idea and inspiration

The idea for this thesis began during the parliamentary elections in Finland. As the younger generations in Finland experience a vastly different world than previous generations, the differences between relevant issues for my generation and younger generations seemed to be worlds apart from what politicians and the media deemed relevant to discuss. This is why I wanted to work on something related to democracy and politics.

My fascination with platforms utilizing the collective intelligence of crowds provided an interesting way to approach democracy and politics. As an avid Reddit user, I was familiar with how the upvoting/downvoting mechanisms in the Reddit comments more often than not tend to curate a thoughtful and intelligent - or alternatively a funny and creative - conversation as the topmost thread. This got me to think of how under-utilised these mechanisms are in attempts to make society and politics better.

A Reddit for political ideas and their evaluation

The initial idea that led me to this topic was an idea of a “Reddit for political ideas and their evaluation”. This would mean a system where

- 1) political ideas or proposals would be collected from crowds, and these would be then
- 2) sorted by crowds using some kind of voting on which ideas are interesting, similar to Reddit’s upvote/downvote system, then
- 3) the ideas would be evaluated by crowds, collecting pro and con arguments on each idea, as well as
- 4) curating the best arguments on each idea by how convincing they seem.

Ultimately the system would aim to provide a way for new and interesting political ideas to bubble up from the crowds and be evaluated in an open forum.

To illustrate the idea, I made a quick visualisation of what it could look like (see Figure 2 on next page).

Reflection on the idea

When reflecting on the idea after immersing myself further into the world of politics and democracy, I realised some of the obvious shortcomings it had.

Insight: People will game the system and downvote the opinions they don’t agree with.

The reflection and evaluation of this idea highlighted the issue of factionalism and the echo chamber like effect of social networks. People coming from vastly different political ideologies see the world in vastly different ways, causing them to disagree on the supposed “quality” or “soundness” of a certain political idea or at least to downvote the other side’s ideas. For example, a common issue with Reddit is that while Reddit’s rules say that one should upvote content and comments that contribute something to the discussion whether or not you agree with it. More importantly, the rules say that users should only downvote content that conflicts with the rules or is inappropriate, and not merely because they disagree with it. However, the often confronted reality on Reddit is that most people downvote content and comments that

they simply don’t agree with regardless of the potential contribution to the diversity of discussion. The insight here is that *people understand how the system works and they consciously or unconsciously use it to support their political perspectives*: to promote thinking that they agree with and to actively work to diminish the prominence of thinking they don’t agree with. I believe it highlights in a very practical way the problem of Habermas’ requirement of “rational consensus” as the goal of deliberative democracy which Mouffe (1999) critiques.

Furthermore, Reddit’s algorithm automatically hides comments that are below a certain threshold of points (i.e. upvotes subtracted by downvotes) which is typically zero. Hence, any opinion that the majority of Reddit users downvote rather than upvote will be automatically hidden from other users. This obviously does not support the presentation of a plurality of perspectives on issues.

The idea would only surface non-controversial ideas that most people agree with.

As an example, the kansalaisaloite.fi petition platform has succeeded in taking to parliament only one proposal so far: that of gender neutral

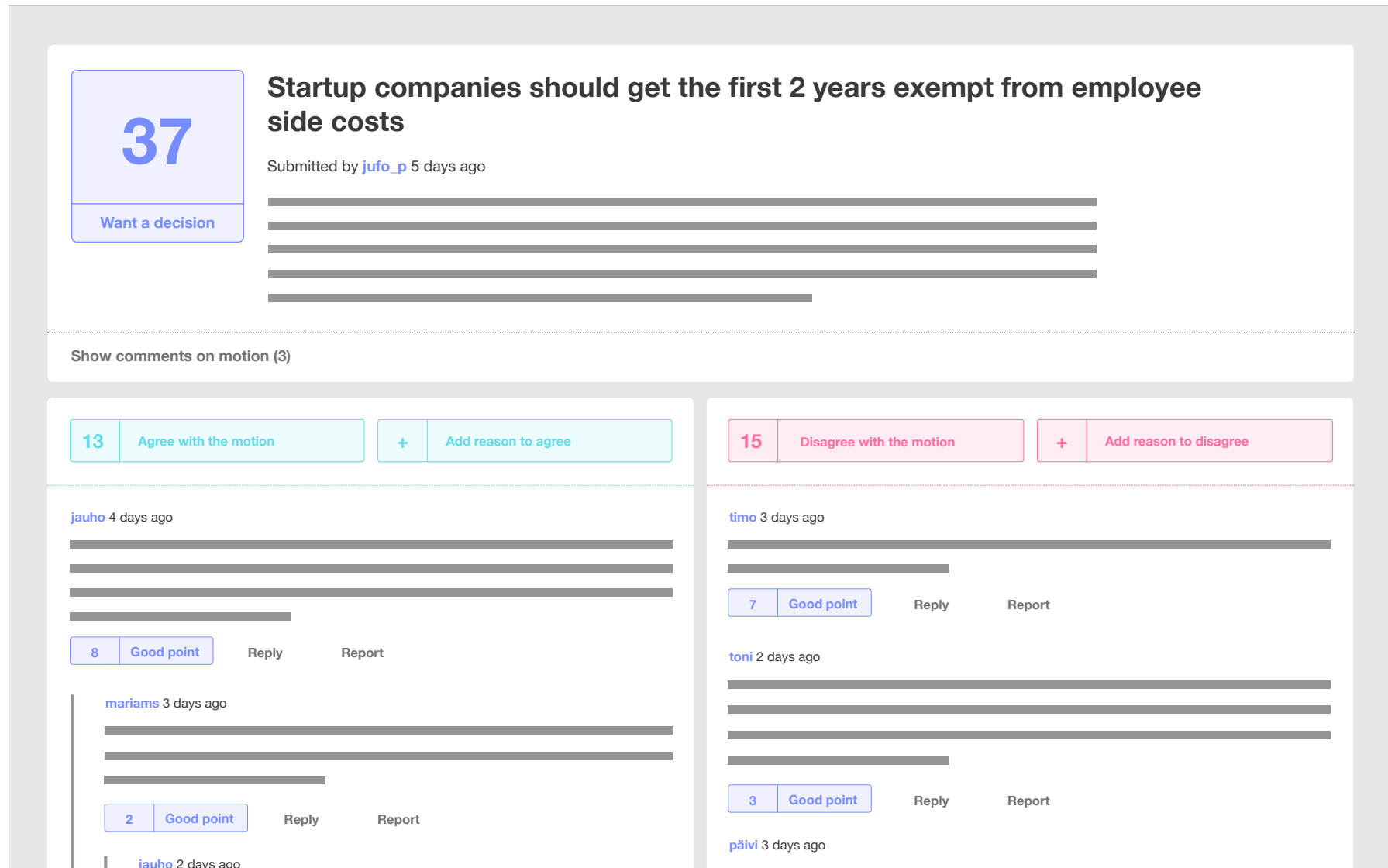


Figure 2. Initial idea quick mock-up: "A Reddit for political ideas"

marriage. This was a proposal that had very strong support from the beginning of the process already. If it would need to be about ideas that already have broad support, it might not be very interesting or valuable. And there are more formal channels, like kansalaisaloite.fi, for that purpose anyway.

Any ideas and opinions that the majority doesn't like would be silenced

If the mechanisms would be similar to Reddit, the end result would be a system that would provide a collection of ideas and their evaluation but where contributions would be sorted – with prominence awarded and arbitrary censorship distributed – by a majority rule. Just like on Reddit, unpopular opinions that the majority does not like would be hidden through downvoting. In this way, it would undermine the voices of the minority and undoubtedly drive them out of the service altogether, further diminishing the legitimacy of the system.

This initial idea - while not the perfect solution - opened up the design space for the thesis. It was the spark of inspiration that suggested that there's potential and opportunity to explore in using collective intelligence mechanisms for

constructive political interactions.

After the initial idea, I proceeded to familiarize myself with existing and inspiring works in the field through benchmarking. I also spent some time reading and reviewing academic literature on democracy, e-democracy and collective intelligence. Next, I will explain how they influenced my thinking and understanding of the design space.

Key insights from benchmarking and literature review

Virtual Habermasian Public Spheres don't seem to work in reality

The concept of a Habermasian public sphere is useful in understanding how politics works in a liberal democracy. For a society to work together, there needs to be some kind of public discussion so that it's possible to find solutions together through democratic means. However, earlier attempts at creating virtual Habermasian public spheres have shown that the chal-

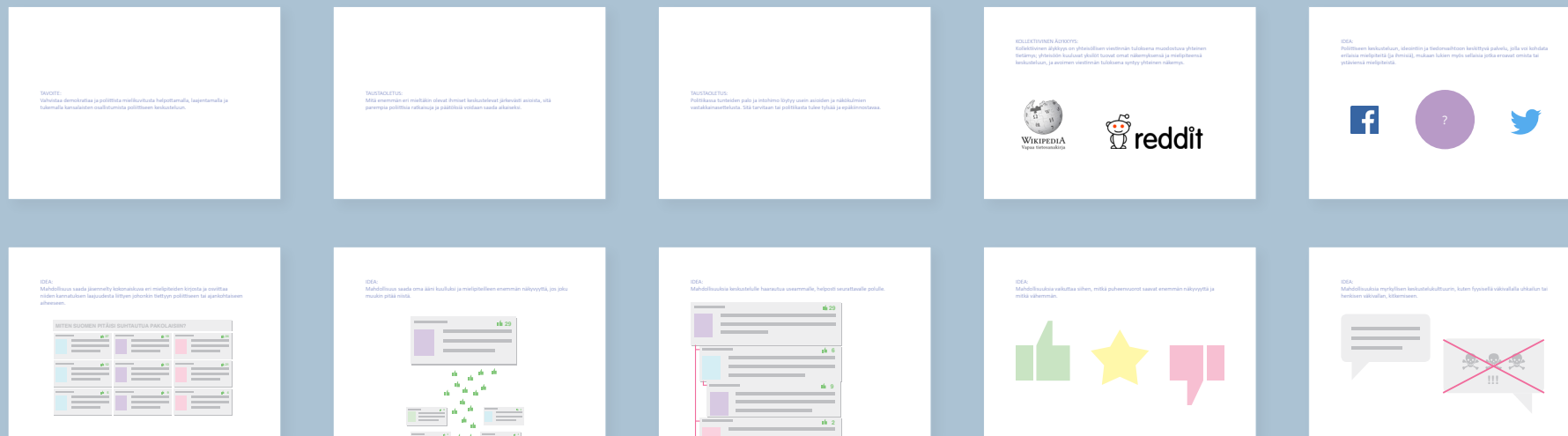
lenges with them typically relate to factionalism and a lack of broad interest, likely caused by the strict requirements for deliberative communication and participation.

Politics is about more than the institutional processes

Politics is more than just the formal procedures of democratic institutions. It's not just about voting, elections, proposals, or finding the right candidate. Besides the formal political posturing and debates by politicians, there's a lot of grass roots activity that happens in private.

Politics is a struggle for power and existence

Politics isn't just about defending the rights of a given social group, but often it's about creating that social group in the first place. Also, different social groups can hold such differing views of the world that requiring them to discuss things using preset terms or according to some predefined premises and rules will favor certain groups at the cost of others. This complexity makes politics so hard. Different groups will see different problems, and each will have their own – potentially incompatible – solutions.



Ideas taken to design co-creation sessions

After the initial idea ran into problems or shortcomings, I decided to take a step back. I did benchmarking and reading up on academic literature. Then I spent a good deal of time coming up with ideas that could help in supporting broad-minded discussion. For the design co-creation I took the ideas that felt like good building blocks for a concept into the

design co-creation assets. I felt like there was a concept there. But since I had been working alone on the project, I wanted some outside perspective to my ideas. I thought that through the design co-creation I could find ways to put these ideas together, make them better, or come up with better ideas.

In the following section, I will explain the ideas I took to the design co-creation, followed by the results of the synthesis phase where I made sense of everything that I'd learned during the project to find a point of view for the final design.

TAVOITE:

Vahvistaa demokratiaa ja poliittista mielikuvitusta helpottamalla, laajentamalla ja tukemalla kansalaisten osallistumista poliittiseen keskusteluun.

GOAL: To strengthen democracy and the political imagination by making it easier for citizens to take part in and supporting broad political discussion

This was the best way of expressing my goal for the project during the co-design sessions.

TAUSTAOLETUS:

Mitä enemmän eri mieltäkin olevat ihmiset keskustelevat järkevästi asioista, sitä parempia poliittisia ratkaisuja ja päätöksiä voidaan saada aikaiseksi.

ASSUMPTION: The more people rationally discuss with each other, the better political solutions and decisions can be achieved

This assumption was included as a way of making it easy to talk about Habermas' ideas of deliberation and the public sphere.

TAUSTAOLETUS:

Politiikassa tunteiden palo ja intohimo löytyy usein asioiden ja näkökulmien vastakkainasettelusta. Sitä tarvitaan tai politiikasta tulee tylsää ja epäkiinnostavaa.

ASSUMPTION: In politics, the fires of emotion and passion are found often in the juxtaposition of notions and perspectives. It's needed or else politics becomes boring and uninteresting.

This was included as a way of talking about Mouffe's ideas of Agonistic Pluralism.

KOLLEKTIIVINEN ÄLYKKYYS:

Kollektiivinen älykkyys on yhteisöllisen viestinnän tuloksena muodostuva yhteinen tietämys; yhteisöön kuuluvat yksilöt tuovat omat näkemyksensä ja mielipiteensä keskusteluun, ja avoimen viestinnän tuloksena syntyy yhteinen näkemys.



COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE: Collective intelligence is the collective understanding resulting from communication among members of a community, where each brings their views, notions and opinions to the discussion and communicates openly.

This was a way of introducing the idea of collective intelligence so that the participants would be better prepared for co-designing. Wikipedia and Reddit were given as examples.

IDEA:

Poliittiseen keskusteluun, ideointiin ja tiedonvaihtoon keskittyvä palvelu, jolla voi kohdata erilaisia mielipiteitä (ja ihmisiä), mukaan lukien myös sellaisia jotka eroavat omista tai ystäviensä mielipiteistä.



IDEA: An online service that focuses on political discussion, ideation and exchange of information, where it's possible to encounter differing opinions (and people), including those different from one's own or one's friends'.

This was an introduction to the general idea that I wanted to explore.

IDEA:

Mahdollisuus saada jäsennelty kokonaiskuva eri mielipiteiden kirjosta ja osviittaa niiden kannatuksen laajuudesta liittyen johonkin tiettyyn poliittiseen tai ajankohtaiseen aiheeseen.



IDEA: The possibility to get an organised big picture of differing opinions and an indication of their popularity regarding a specific political or current topic.

This was a way to introduce and explore the idea that an algorithm could organise the opinions based on the data from crowds of people that liked them. This would be done so that opinions liked by a group of people would be sorted near each other, and opinions disliked by the same people would be sorted further away from them.

IDEA:
Mahdollisuus saada oma ääni kuulluksi ja mielipiteilleen enemmän näkyvyyttä, jos joku muukin pitää niistä.



IDEA: The possibility of getting your voice heard and more visibility for your opinion if someone else also likes it.

This was a way of introducing and exploring the idea of crowd-curating.

IDEA:
Mahdollisuuksia keskustelulle haarautua useammalle, helposti seurattavalle polulle.



IDEA: Opportunities for the discussion to fork into multiple, easily followable paths.

This was a way of introducing and exploring the idea of threaded discussions.

IDEA:

Mahdollisuuksia vaikuttaa siihen, mitkä puheenvuorot saavat enemmän näkyvyyttä ja mitkä vähemmän.

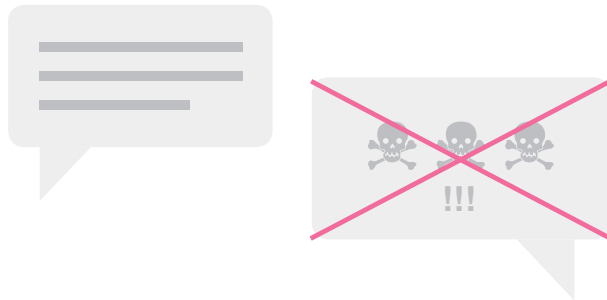


IDEA: Opportunities to influence which comments get more visibility and which ones less.

This was a way of exploring the idea of upvoting and downvoting as well as other possible interactions with content.

IDEA:

Mahdollisuuksia myrkyllisen keskustelukulttuurin, kuten fyysisellä väkivallalla uhkailun tai henkisen väkivallan, kitkemiseen.



IDEA: Possibilities for getting rid of toxic behavior, such as harrassment or threatening with violence.

This was a way of exploring the possibilities for moderating the discussions.

Interview and co-design participants



Juuso, 38
Data visualisation
expert & journalist



Lilja, 28
Multi-expert
policy wonk & debunker



Matti, 28
IT expert &
privacy advocate



Niklas, 36
NGO veteran &
“Political nerd”



Nina, 29
Women's studies
academic & activist



Saara, 28
Green career
politician & PA to MP



Tiina, 21
The Finns Party youth
& free speech advocate



Tuomas, 34
Digital journalism
producer & TV host

Synthesis

This section describes the results of the design synthesis and sensemaking work done after the design co-creation sessions.

Defining the problem(s)

A key part of each interview was before going into working on the ideas I had prepared for the co-design, I would have a relaxed discussion about the political activities of the participant and also discuss - among other things - what they saw as the challenges of politics and democracy today. Each participant brought their unique perspective to the discussion.

[For a more detailed look at what I learned from each individual participant, please see “Appendix C: Interview and co-design debriefs” at the end of this document.]

Taking the learnings from the discussions and by connecting them with my own experiences and other sources available, I crafted these descriptions of the problems facing democracy here in Finland at the moment. However, many of these problems are probably applicable to

many other Western democracies as well. The problems are also linked, meaning they affect and reinforce each other to some degree.

Lack of in politics and awareness of issues

Tuomas (34): “Most people don’t care to talk or comment about politics, why would they?”

A lot of people don’t seem to be interested in politics. As a result, many are not informed on the details of political issues. This leads to *a lack of ambition and accountability in politics* because if citizens don’t know about the details of issues how can they evaluate the policies enacted by their representatives in power?

Another way it manifests is through *a slowness in the ability of politics to change the status quo*. For example, Finland is a country with strong union power in labor negotiations. The current economic situation seems to require some kind of re-evaluation of the current labor laws and agreements to match the changing environment and the changing nature of work in general. However, no change is possible unless the labor regulation stakeholders (government, employers’ interest groups, and labor unions) agree on the conditions and future direction. While

the negotiators for the stakeholders might be well-informed on the situation and the changing nature of work, if their constituency doesn’t understand the situation or isn’t aware of the issues the negotiators will not have a mandate for anything but small incremental changes to the status quo. Even these small changes will be then seen as negotiation victories or defeats for the parties involved, making any kind of agile response to changing conditions impossible. This is likely a problem with democracy in general. But following Barber’s (1984) thinking, my hypothesis is:

Hypothesis: a better informed and participating constituency will allow for a better performing democracy, i.e. faster and better decision-making.

And to have a better informed constituency, there must be easily accessible and enjoyable avenues to follow and participate in political discourse for those who are interested.

So why aren’t some people interested in participating in political discussion?

Hypothesis: Some people are not interested in taking part in political discussion because the issues are complex and to voice an opinion on

matters means taking a risk of losing face.

For example: Matti (28) is interested in many politically driven issues from space exploration to online privacy. However, despite his interest in these political issues, he rarely prefers to take part in political discussion on social media because he doesn't know enough about the politics surrounding them. Ultimately, Matti doesn't feel confident in presenting an opinion on the politics surrounding the issues since he doesn't know enough about the details.

Hypothesis: By cultivating practices of political discussion on a platform that is open and public people who are interested in politics can develop their argumentative repertoire, find their political orientation and ultimately participate in democratic process better.

Lack of options and alternatives in politics

While Finland is going through a prolonged recession and facing severe structural problems, Finnish politics seems to be stuck in a situation where not a lot of new and interesting ideas are being considered as solutions to the situation. The discussion during the previous elections

was nearly completely centred around how to cut public spending to curb increasing government debt. While economists agree it's one way of addressing the issue, it is hardly the only way. But for some reason, there were really no alternative solutions proposed even though it was an election for the Finnish parliament and for the new government.

Niklas (36): "A problem that I see is that the scope of the political options available is pretty small and limited"

Tiina (21): "It's so hard to do anything new in politics. There should be a better way to try out new ideas."

Lilja (28): "Our politicians have probably inadvertently yet voluntarily relinquished a lot of their power"

One of the reasons for this could be that "traditional media" or the popular news media on TV, print and digital can't spare enough room for proper discussion around alternatives. People's attention spans are inadequate to consider multiple solutions and the limited media space just can't accommodate the breadth of the discussion.

Hypothesis: Online media could offer room for prolonged and unlimited discussion around topics and by tapping into the power of crowds it could be sorted to be accessible and enjoyable to browse for a large audience.

Polarisation and "extremisation" of politics

Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn aggregate content for their users. A user connects to people they know and like, and the platform feeds content from these people to the user. Facebook even uses sophisticated algorithms to filter content from the user's network that it predicts the user will like and agree with. With Reddit, the user selects the communities (subreddits) whom she wants to receive top-rated content from. On Twitter, people generally connect with other people who's thinking they like. All of this has an *echo chamber effect* by providing the user with steady streams of content from their networks that reinforce their pre-existing notions and world view.

Hypothesis: The echo chamber effect of social networks and modern media consumption practices are reinforcing people's political ideas and encouraging a polarisation of political culture.

Lack of political discussion over “tribal” boundaries

A change in perspective for me came about in identifying this problem. The initial idea was about how new ideas could be surfaced - with a naive assumption that people would generally favour the same kind of new ideas as I would. But the interviews and synthesis led me to the observation that thanks to the like-minded bubbles created by social networks, we don't typically have prolonged discussions with people who are not from our typical social circles.

Facebook: People are stuck within they're respective network-bubbles. Talking politics on other's walls/posts is not always correct and can be considered a faux pas.

Twitter: Such short messages and fast reactions. It's hard to have a meaningful discussion.

Hypothesis: If people had a natural way of being exposed also to content that doesn't only reinforce their existing beliefs, they could find it easier to talk and find common ground with people who have different political views.

Hypothesis: If people had a natural way of discussing political topics with people who are

not from their typical social circles, they might develop a broader perspective on issues.

Current practices of online political discussion

Based on the interviews with the co-design participants and observations made online, I crafted a way of mapping out the different practices involved in online political discussion. While it's admittedly a simplified depiction of reality, it helped me make sense of the design space and understand the behaviors through which people participate in online politics.

Social objects function as the locus for online political discussion

Based on observations and time spent online, it appears that political discussion is often triggered and located in conjunction with links, blog posts, news articles, or forum threads that people share or post online. Engström (2005) coined the term “social object” to refer to virtual objects around which social interaction happens on online social media platforms. Many websites and services treat these as objects that can be linked to from other parts of the internet (i.e. they have a permanent url) or that can be in

other ways be interacted with within the system (e.g. Facebook: sharing, liking, commenting; Twitter: commenting, favoriting, retweeting). So when a person writes a post on Facebook and shares it with her network it becomes a social object. Likewise if a person shares an opinion piece as a link on Facebook, it becomes a social object that others can interact with in the platform. Or another option is submitting a link to a news article onto Reddit, it becomes a Reddit post and others can link to it, view it and comment it. It is around these types of social objects that discussions typically happen, inspired by the objects. This was a key insight in the later direction of the project. I will come back to this later.

Four practices for interacting with social objects online

During synthesis, I identified four interesting practices regarding the topic: two different practices of producing and two different ways of consuming or interacting with these social objects around which online political discussion happens. I will label them here *rallying*, *deliberating*, *low-effort supporting*, and *aggregating*, respectively. They are archetypes rather than discreet categories. What I mean by this is that sometimes a practice will show characteristics

of two of these archetypical practices, such as a combination of rallying and deliberating. I will describe each practice in more detail next.

Rallying

Emotional, ideological, or identity-oriented posting that aims to persuade and gather support for a position, cause or idea – or against another.

This is when someone puts a stake in the ground. An example could be someone writing an opinion piece on why the government’s austerity program is a danger to the future of the nation or a post on denouncing racism in politics. It’s not looking to provide any kind of practical solution or compromise, but rather aims to justify or define a specific political, ideological or identity-related view or position. It’s about showing who you are and what you stand for. And that we’re right and the others are wrong. Often, it will appeal to emotions and may even exaggerate claims to boost its effectiveness. Humor is also commonly used. Satirical political cartoons can be considered an example. Rallying aims to build support and persuade people. On social media, rallying can involve actually writing the position yourself or the “lighter” version of sharing an opinion piece

or other article that could itself be considered a “rallying post” with a note that continues on the same theme.

Rallying is very common on social media, where garnering support and likes is commonplace. But rallying seems to be also happening often in

more “traditional” media, such as newspapers and their online portals. Perhaps these media outlets understand the viral potential of these kinds of articles and favor them to get more reach and visitors to their online properties. Hence, rallying is inherently incentivized for anyone who is interested in getting likes or

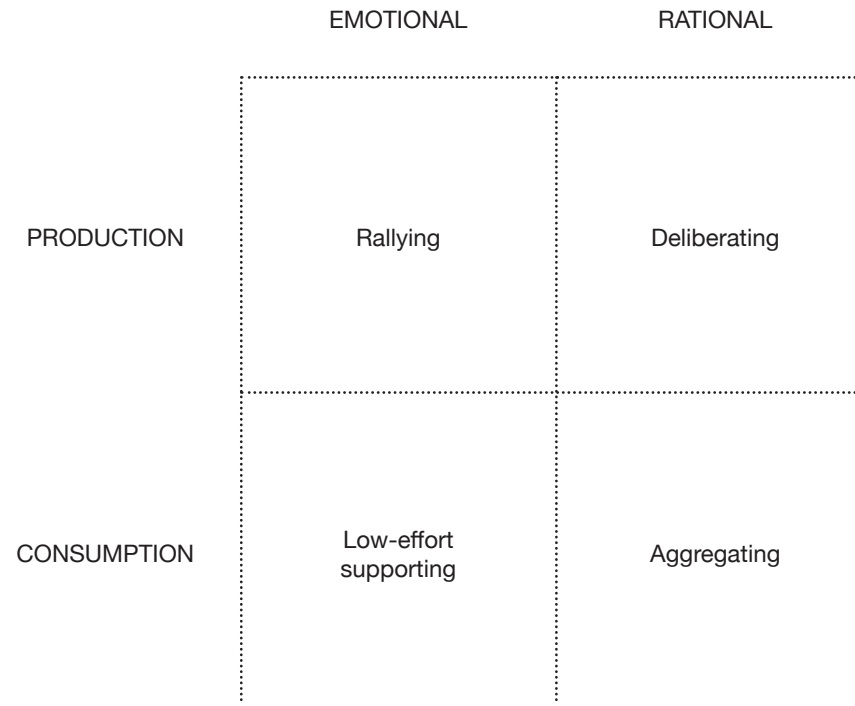


Figure 3. Four practices for interacting with social objects online

shares on social media.

Deliberating

Rational, pragmatic, and deliberative posting that aims to find a solution or a perspective to an issue that could be accepted by most people.

Deliberating refers to the more rational, pragmatic, solution-oriented, and deliberative posts. They're not about attacking the "other side" like the rallying posts often are. But these attempt to find compromise and a solution that acknowledges the merits of the arguments on the opposing side as well. However, these kinds of posts don't get as many likes, reads or shares as easily as the more viscerally compelling rallying posts.

Tiina (21): "If someone writes a moderate and sensible post, no one will be interested in it"

Juuso (37) who is an active debater and political commentator on social media recalled having written some carefully crafted posts on Facebook deliberating on issues such as the future of the Finnish dependency ratio. He explained how he went to great lengths in collecting facts and evidence to support his deliberative arguments before posting. After publicizing his

post achieved a wide reach as people shared it in their networks as well. While completely anecdotal, it would suggest that even these kinds of posts can get shares due to people wanting to promote a "moderate, well-prepared opinion on a current issue". However, writing up a successful deliberative post would seem to require a lot of effort.

Low-effort supporting

Showing support for a position or opinion using a low-effort interaction such as liking, sharing, upvoting, retweeting or favoriting.

In consuming politically relevant content on social media, low-effort interactions such as liking, sharing, upvoting, retweeting or favoriting have provided an easy way for people to show support for ideas and causes - without having to craft a verbal message. This could be considered the online counterpart to clapping at a rally or nodding in a meeting. It's especially useful for those people who otherwise wouldn't feel comfortable in expressing their political positions and views explicitly and verbally. But the impact of low-effort supporting is not purely symbolic either. Typically - depending on the platform used - this low-effort supporting will also have real consequences for the supported

message: liking a post on Facebook will increase its reach into your network as well, upvoting a post or comment on Reddit will give it more prominence and visibility within the community, retweeting a tweet on Twitter will spread it to your network as well. Hence, low-effort supporting is a real and easy way of supporting a given message or announcing one's membership with a certain group.

Juuso (37): "for a lot of people sharing stuff on the internet is just a way of appearing like a certain type of person"

Aggregating

Automatically collecting content from multiple sources.

Aggregating refers to the practice of gathering information and content from multiple sources. Many tools and services exist online to help with this. Facebook and Twitter will aggregate content shared by your social network connections. Reddit will aggregate the most popular content from selected subreddit communities. Ampparit is a service that is commonly used among Finnish people working in politics. It aggregates all the news headlines from different news sources in Finland. All of the participants that I

interviewed used at least one tool to aggregate content. Most commonly it was explained as wanting to know what's out there and for some different tools were used to get a view for what's outside their typical social networks.

Nina (28): "I want to know what the other side is using as discussion-openers"

Co-creation: What I learned from working on my ideas with different people

Next, I will present the key pieces of feedback that - in addition to the synthesis above - led to the new direction for the design work.

Positive feedback The ideas and approach in general seemed to be easily understood and appreciated. In many of the interviews it was clear already before the concept was introduced that the problems with current politics has to do with the polarisation and division within Finnish society that was reflected also in online political discussion. Especially the idea about an interface that would sort opinions based on affinity created a lot of discussion and interest.

Niklas (36): *"This attempt at breaking hege-*

monic discourse is really important and interesting"

Tiina (21): *"This could be a great way to surface new and interesting ideas"*

Critical feedback focused on the challenge of getting enough people to a new service to discuss politics with random strangers. It's a valid point and while initially it felt like a deathblow to the concept – ultimately led me to an insight on the new direction.

Tuomas (34): "Most people don't care to comment or discuss politics. Why would they?"

Lilja (28): "I would probably not see myself contributing by writing to this kind of service. It takes a lot to take on a new platform, and I already know my existing platforms quite well."

Juuso (37): "Integrating this with existing platforms is really important for its success."

Strategic direction from synthesis

During the synthesis, I struggled with the very valid point that not many people would be in-

terested in discussing politics, not to mention adopting the use of a new platform just for that. But as I was making sense of the current practices of online political discussion, I had a moment of insight that opened up a new direction.

Focus on the social objects that are the locus of political discussion

The insight that led me to a new direction was when I was thinking of ways to describe the practices, I realised that all of the practices I am describing relate to interacting with virtual objects, such as facebook posts or opinion pieces. This reminded me of Engeström's point of how social objects are the locus of social interaction on social media services. My conceptualisation of the practices – and the aggregating practice specifically – led me to a new concept idea that isn't just about political discussion. If the concept is only about political discussion, it will only be filled with people who have something to shout. But if it is filled with news, opinions and interesting content, everyone can be interested, thereby "luring in" also people who might not be politically active yet. It has to be interesting to many, not just those who want to come to discuss politics. Next, I will present the final concept that was inspired by this insight.

Concept: “Get the big picture on current issues”

What is it? **“A crowdsourced and crowd-curated portfolio of news, analysis, ideas and discussion”**

It’s an aggregator of news, viewpoints, opinions, ideas, and offers a platform for discussion and the exchange of ideas around them.

It’s a platform that uses the power of crowds to gather together, sort and discuss a broad range of articles, content, and perspectives around current topics.

It offers a broader view on current issues and topics for those who want to look outside their own bubble.

Why do we need it?

We need it because social media is polarising politics by diminishing our capabilities to see outside of our personal filter bubbles.

Today and even more so in the future, we use the Internet and social media to aggregate most of the news and opinion content that we consume from different sources. But we are not doing it in a way that would expose us to new ideas and perspectives - but the opposite. The new ways of acquiring our news and opinions provide us with a distorted reflection of our selves. The personal social networks that we build online and the algorithms that filter the content that is provided to us only feed us content that aligns with our existing preconceptions. Ultimately this reinforces our view of the world and makes us feel good about it. It makes us feel like we're a part of a righteous majority and that the rest of the world has gone insane. This is having a polarising effect on politics and making it harder to relate to others. We need to broaden our horizons and be exposed to ideas beyond the comfort of our bubbles.

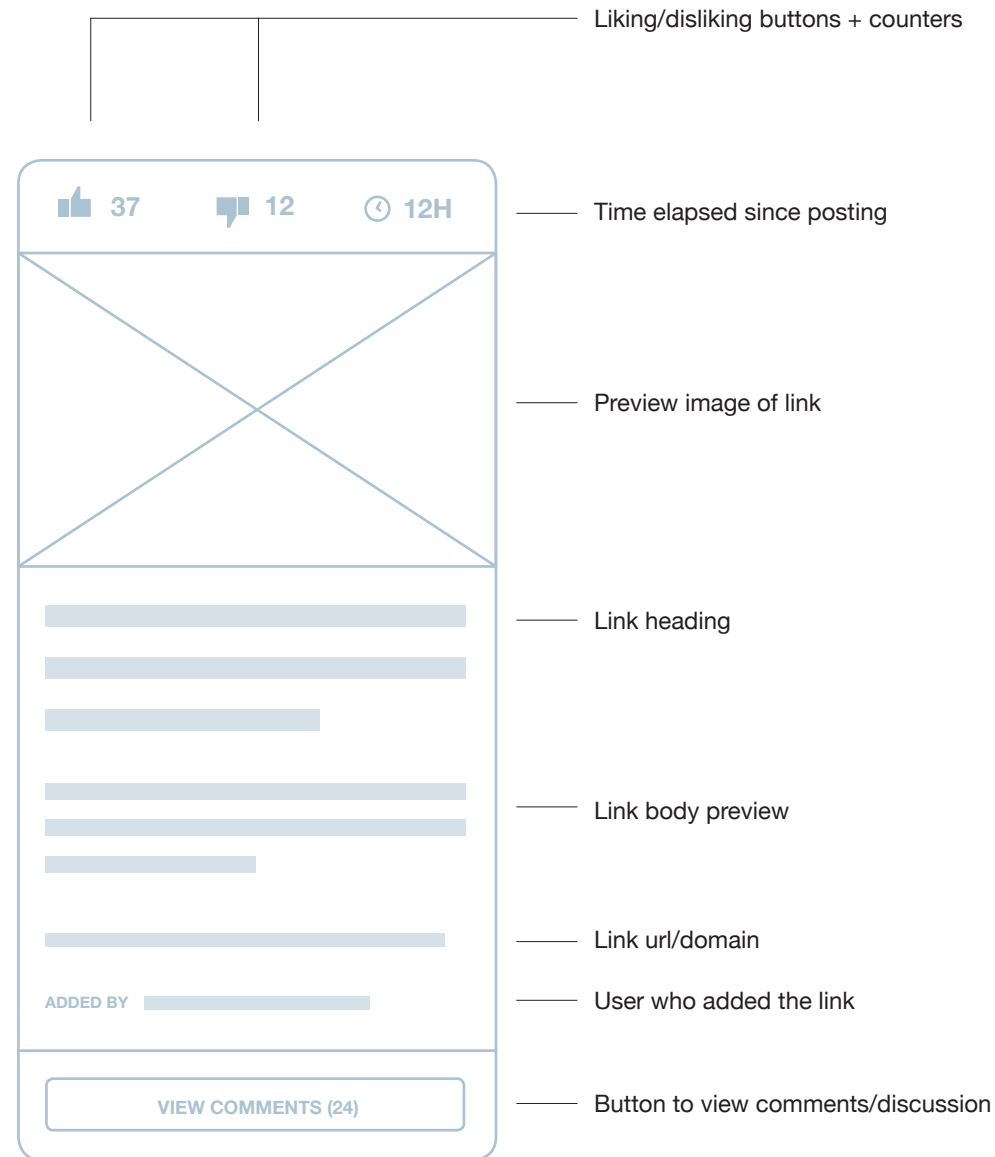
We need a space where we can collectively gather new ideas, perspectives and news on current issues. We need their presentation to reflect and represent the variety of perspectives out there - so we find not only the things that we agree with naturally but also notions that challenge our understandings. We also need a space where these issues and ideas can be discussed broadly and in a way that allows for a multitude of voices, viewpoints, and approaches. One that does not only represent the views of the majority or a vocal minority. Where even those who don't know how to express their views verbally can support the notions, opinions, and ideas that are important to them.

Core idea: A post

A post is the basic unit of content on the platform. It could be a link to a news article, opinion piece, public Facebook post, blog post, or even just text written within the platform itself. If the post is a link, it shows a preview of the content and links to the original.

Users can rate a post by liking or disliking it. Posts with more likes get more visibility.

The post is presented with a card-like metaphor. The information behind the link in the post is condensed into a simple and standard format that serves as a representation of the content in the topic view.



Core idea: A topic

Posts are added to specific topics. A topic can be for example a current event – which could then gather all the relevant reporting, analysis and opinions from all around the web to go under it. A topic can also be a problem that concerns everyone, such as the economic crisis – which could then solicit analysis on the problem or ideas on how to solve it.

Any user can add a topic and choose how to frame it in order to solicit certain types of posts under it. Any user can also vote a topic interesting. This will increase the topic's visibility and prominence on the site. And any user can add a post under a topic. This ensures that there is a possibility for a diversity of perspectives within a given topic.

The posts under a topic flow from top to bottom on multiple columns. The view can be scrolled downward to see more posts.



Crowd-sorting within a topic

Within a topic, posts are sorted using the data provided by people liking or disliking the posts. This data is used to sort the diversity of posts under a topic in two ways:

Vertical positioning: Hotness

The topmost posts will be the hottest posts. Generally, it means that they've received a lot of likes in a short time. The aim is to separate the signal from the noise, the good from the bad in terms of quality.

Horizontal positioning: Affinity

The horizontal positioning of a post within a topic is determined by the affinity of a given post to other posts around it. The aim is to sort posts liked by a group of people under each other, and separate from each other two posts of which one is liked and the other is disliked by a group of people.



Hotness of a post

The hotness of a post is a general indicator of how interesting the post is at a given time. Hot-test posts will be shown at the top of the topic. This helps ensure that users opening up a topic will be presented with the most interesting content first, instead of having to sift through all the content to find something interesting.

Hotness is a calculation of two variables:

- Time that has passed since it's posting
- Amount of likes vs. dislikes

Time plays an important factor in keeping the topics dynamic and the content fresh. New posts start at the top where the hottest posts are. However, they quickly start dropping to lower positions if they don't receive enough likes. This ensures that new posts receive an opportunity to gather attention and likes before dropping to lower positions.

The concept of sorting posts by hotness is not unique or novel. Services like Reddit, Slashdot and Quora have been using similar systems successfully for years. Based on observations

from Reddit, we can predict that the more likes a post receives and the higher its positioning within the topic, the more attention and likes it will gather.

To support the inclusion of also marginal perspectives within a topic, the increase of likes has a diminishing effect on the post's hotness. Reddit's hot ranking uses the logarithm function to weight the first votes higher than the rest (Salihendic 2015). The first 10 upvotes on Reddit have the same impact as the next 100 upvotes, and the next 1000 upvotes, and so on. A similar logarithmic algorithm would help support the inclusion of more than just the most popular ideas on this platform as well.

Political discussion is fuelled by conflicting perspectives and agonism. Based on observations on Reddit and Hs.fi, people don't seem to care if the downvote or "not well argued" button is meant for objectively evaluating a content piece's merits. People will downvote or click as "poorly argued" pretty much any view they don't like or agree with. Hence, dislikes should not be considered too much of an indicator of

how objectively poor a post is but rather that the person disliking merely does not like the view expressed. Reddit counts the net "score" of a post as upvotes subtracted by downvotes. In contrast to Reddit, this platform should either ignore dislikes completely when calculating hotness or weight a dislike's importance to lower than a like. This could help prevent a tyranny of the majority.

Affinity-based sorting

The analogy for this idea could be the seating order of parliament. In the Finnish parliament members are seated by party, i.e. amongst other somewhat similar-minded members. The seats form a semi-circle in which the seating represents a kind of a political spectrum.

The aim here is to gather a diversity of perspectives as posts under a topic. Then have the posts sorted horizontally based on the likes and dislikes. If a user likes two posts, those posts are considered similar and are drawn to each other on the horizontal dimension. If the user likes one post and dislikes another, those posts are interpreted as dissimilar and push each other away from each other.

By aggregating and analysing the data from the crowds and using that to determine the horizontal order of the posts, we could hopefully discover and visualise a spectrum of differing perspectives different groups of people prefer on a given issue. This could, in turn, make it easier for people to get a broader view of an issue and understand the plurality of viewpoints beyond their own.

We could expect the emotional rallying posts to populate the two ends of the horizontal dimension, getting many likes but also many dislikes from the opposing side. The middle ground could then be a space where the compromising, consensus-seeking, deliberative or otherwise moderate posts can surface from. These would be posts that do not garner as many likes as the rallying posts but also don't get many dislikes as people are not so opposed to them as they might be with the more controversial rallying posts.

Discussion within a topic

Each topic will have a space for threaded discussions about the topic in general as well as around each individual post within the topic.

The discussions can also be crowd-curated using likes and dislikes. However, a different algorithm for sorting the comments than in sorting the posts. The Reddit “best” comment sorting algorithm (Munroe 2009) is a good start. But Reddit automatically hides comments that have more upvotes than downvotes. This should be disabled or at least the impact of dislikes should be weighted less in comparison to likes to ensure that minority voices are also represented.

Affinity-based sorting is difficult when dealing with threaded discussions that already take use of the horizontal dimension to show the embedded relationships of comments. If technically feasible, the affinity between controversial comments could be analysed so the sorting algorithm would not only rank the best comments based purely on time and likes vs. dislikes but would also favor the inclusion of opposing viewpoints in the discussion and calculate the balanced representation based on votes.



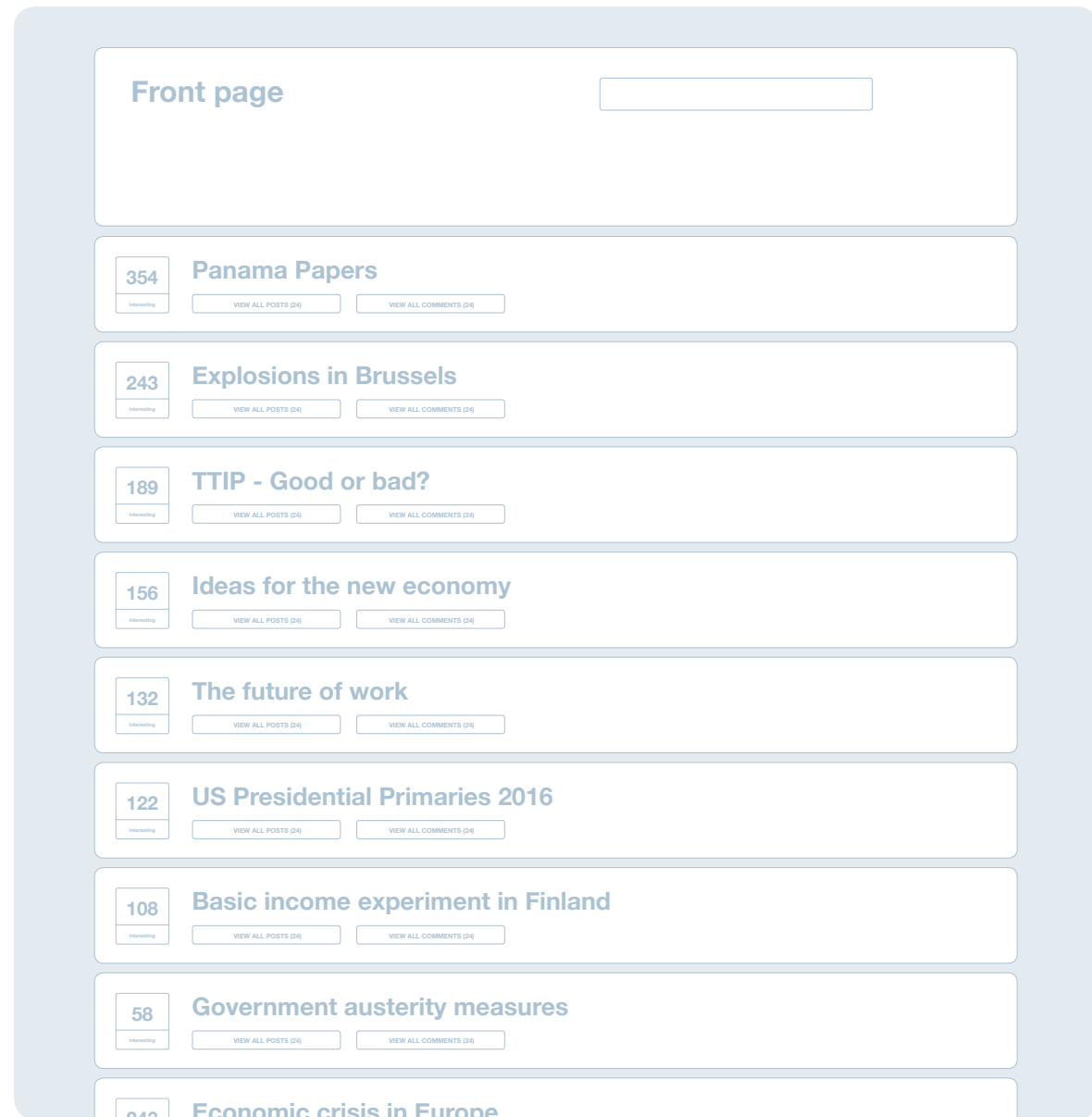
Front page

The front page of the platform helps guide users to the topics that are *interesting* and *relevant* for them. It presents the most interesting relevant topics for the user as they arrive.

The *interestingness* of a given topic can be determined by the community. Every user can vote a topic to be interesting. And by aggregating this data, the topics in the system can be sorted by hotness in a similar way as the posts within a topic.

The *relevance* of a given topic depends on several factors: language, geographical area, and interests. The operating language is the most fundamental choice but the relevant geographical area could include categories for topics, such as *the world*, *Europe*, *Finland*, and *Helsinki* for a user who comes from Helsinki, Finland. Interests are secondary factors and could be tags that users can use to filter or specifically highlight certain areas of interest, such as *economics*, *political ideas*, *current events*, and so on.

The final solution for organising the topics and presenting them on the front page will need to be considered in later work.



Who would use it and why?

Politically active

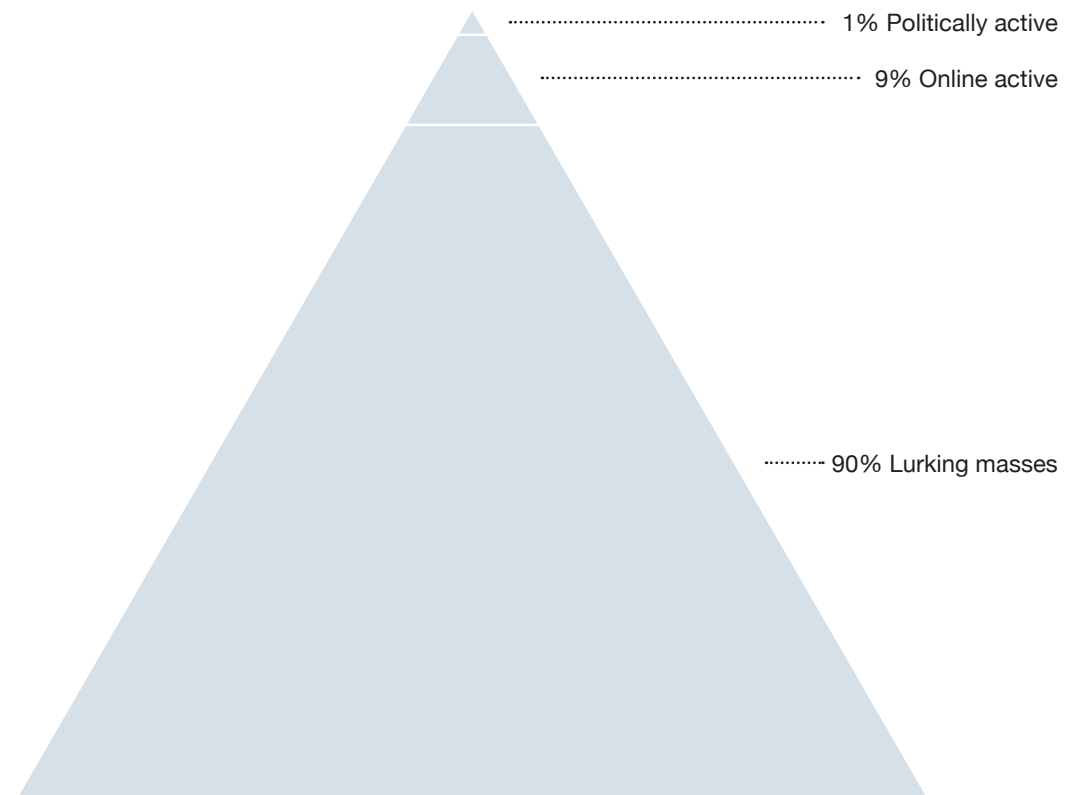
These are the active contributors who may be somehow connected to politics anyway: politicians, activists, party members, NGO executives, lobbyists, journalists, etc. They are likely pushing a specific agenda or have some political goals to pursue. They do most of the posting and commenting.

Online active

These are users who are comfortable expressing their opinions online. They will likely create an account so that they can comment on things and vote on things. They take pleasure in asserting themselves online and do most of the curating (voting) work and some of the commenting.

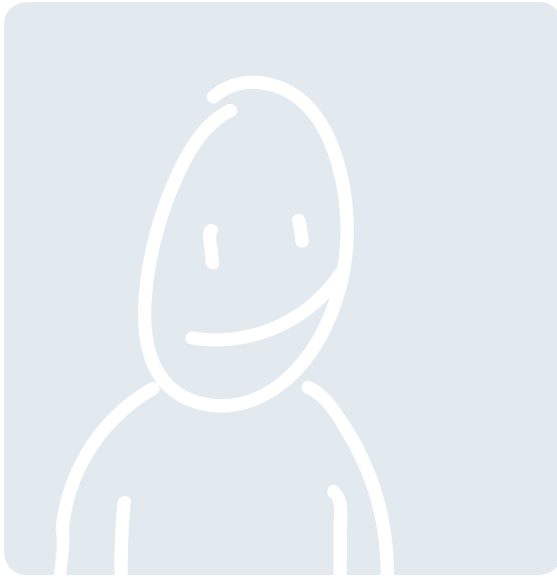
Lurking masses

These are the of people who will use the service just to get a broader picture on specific topics: news, crises, ideas. They might not even have an account on the platform. They don't need it.



Platform expected user base
Based on the "1% rule of Internet communities"
(Wikipedia 2016)

Lauri's story

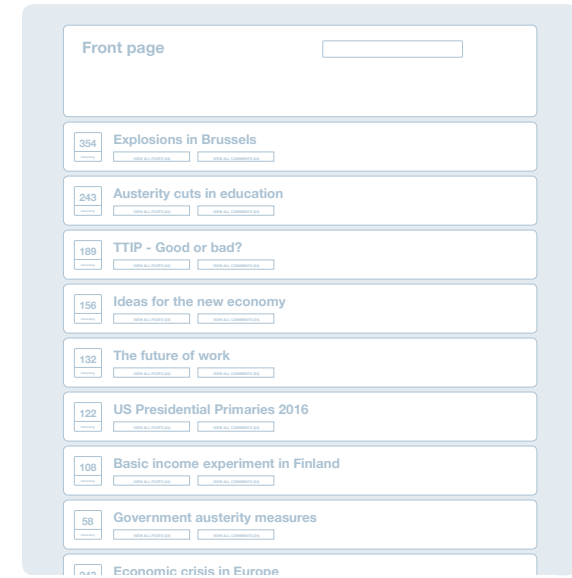


Lauri is interested in world politics and foreign policy. He likes to consider himself as an insightful commentator on these topics.



In the morning news, he reads about a terrorist bomb attack that happened in Brussels. But he's not satisfied with just the reporting in his morning paper.

"This is horrible. I wonder what I can piece together from other sources about the ongoing investigation and the reaction from officials and politicians," Lauri thinks to himself.



He heads to the platform. On the front page, he can see the topic "Explosions in Brussels". It seems to be getting a lot of attention from users; lots of posts and comments have recently been added to the topic.



Lauri clicks open the topic. Under the topic he can see many different news articles from different sources and a variety of different published opinions and analysis on the incident.

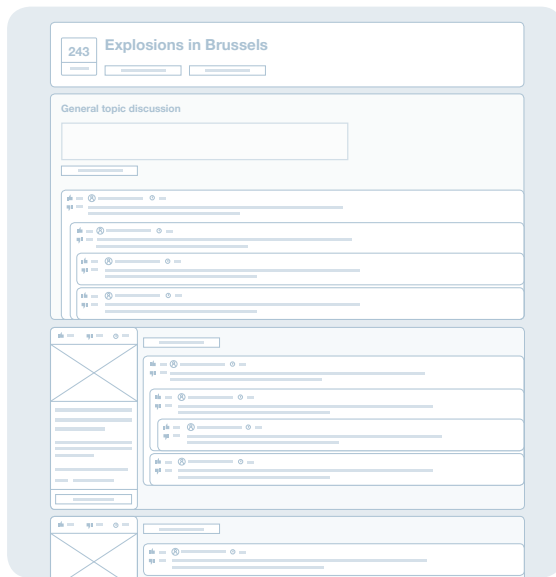


Lauri looks first at the hottest pieces near the top and skims the different perspectives from left to right. The posts undergo a noticeable shift in perspective as he skims the topmost articles horizontally. He clicks open a few ones and skims the quickly for information he's interested in.



Lauri upvotes some of the articles and analysis pieces that seem to do a good job at representing the situation, thinking: "This tells it like it is and isn't trying to put a spin on it. And this one makes a good point about how we should react."

He also gives a few downvotes to articles that don't seem to be very balanced in their reporting and some opinions that are "just plain stupid".



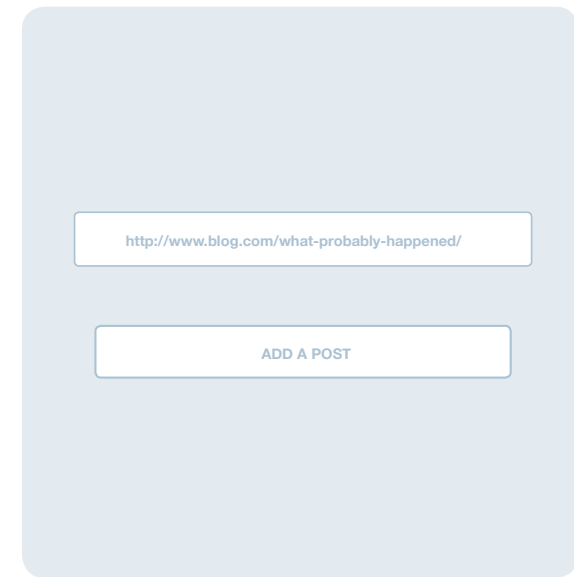
Lauri checks the comments for the topic. It's already bustling with discussion. He writes a comment about a post that seems to be jumping to conclusions a little too early, exclaiming how "we don't have enough information to make such claims." He also likes some other comments that make good points.

He follows the topic. "I want to be able to easily come back and read the analysis of the events once it's been posted here and reply to the comments I get."



Later, Lauri finds an insightful blog post that gives a good analysis of the events.

"This is a good one. People should read this."



He checks if the blog post is already posted under the topic. Turns out it's not been added yet! Lauri adds it to the topic. Now he will get points from everyone who likes the piece he posted.

He also shares with his friends on Facebook that he's posted something to the topic so his friends can easily find it - "and like it so that it gets the attention it deserves" he thinks to himself.

Rewarding contributors

Because this is a system based on the voluntary work done by its users in creating and curating the content, it's important to acknowledge the contributions of individuals. Glory and fame are common incentives for individuals participating in online collective intelligence platforms (Malone et al. 2010).

For example Reddit counts every upvote (minus downvotes) for every comment or link shared towards that user's comment or link karma points. While it's a common joke in the community that karma points are worthless, it's still considered as a quantified measurement of one's contribution to the community. Reddit is about collecting the best links on the Internet and I argue that for its users link karma points are considered a sign of prestige, of the quality of the links or sources of content that the user has. Following this logic, if this platform is about collecting a broad "big picture" of current issues, then it's user's can potentially take pride in their contributions to the collective understanding or "big picture" of current issues. The contributions of users could be quantified with two kinds of points:

Posting points

Posting points refer to the aggregate number of likes the posts added by the user have garnered from other users. To avoid heavily incentivizing the kind of inflammatory content that the rallying practice might involve, it might be worth calculating posting points as aggregate number of likes on posts added by the user minus dislikes on the posts. But in this case, the impact of dislikes on points should be somehow weighted to not discourage posting content that will get more dislikes than likes, as these can still represent valuable minority positions – even if the majority of users do not agree with them.

Discussion points

Discussion points refer to the aggregate number of likes the user's comments have in the discussions. Similar to posting points, they quantify the user's contributions to the discussion on the platform and thus encourage people to write comments that are appreciated and supported by others.

Conclusions

In this thesis, I have taken on the task of exploring ideas for enhancing political discussion online. It hasn't been an easy task – but I have felt it has been a necessary one. In the process, I have proposed a practice-theoretical ethnographic methodology to understanding human behavior in design research, and argued for its value in service design work. In the design exploration, I have presented three stages of my conceptual exploration and shown how the practice-oriented approach can be applied within a real exploratory design project. The final and resulting concept I am proposing contributes to the discourse of e-democracy. However, it is merely an opening in a direction that I

believe should be explored further in later work. In this section, I will evaluate the significance of my work in the context of broader academic and design discourse, followed by my reflection on the applied methodology, process, and the final outcome of this project. The section ends with some final words and my thoughts on future directions.

Discussion

The concept presented in this thesis contributes to the discourse of e-democracy with a propos-

al that attempts to synthesize ideas from the Habermasian concept of a *public sphere* as well as Mouffe's (1999) *pluralistic agonism*. I argue that the concept could enhance the manifestation of an online public sphere by providing a collective aggregation of different sources of content and political opinion online, thereby allowing its users to get a "bigger picture" of the discourse relating to a specific topic. Furthermore, by allowing its users to vote on the content they like or dislike, and to have those votes influence the prominence and positioning of each piece of content within the topic, it could provide an interesting presentation of the distribution and diversity of voices within

the given topic. In this sense, Mouffe's (1999) issue with the Habermasian requirement of "rational consensus" could be relieved: The platform – given this kind of an affinity-based crowd-sorting of content – could hopefully support a plurality of perspectives and voices, not only those deemed "rational" by a dominant majority.

The platform could potentially also avoid some of the problems of the virtual Habermasian public spheres of the early e-democracy days by allowing more freedom in the ways of expressing political thought and opinion. I have not taken it upon me to write any rules for the conduct on this platform within the scope of this thesis. Some rules and a developed governance system including moderation and the administration of the system as a whole would be required to ensure that the culture on the platform remains conducive for civil discussion and the exchange of information. Who would be the moderators or administrators and what would their role in this concept be? The Reddit model of smaller communities ("subreddits") which can be spawned by any user and subscribed to by others could be a working model for organising the topics on this platform as well. However, the moderators' powers need to be considered carefully in this kind of an arrangement, so as

to prohibit abuses. This should be a topic for future research.

Next, I will take a brief moment to reflect on some possible outcomes and effects of the proposed concept. How would it affect people's media consumption practices? How would it affect political discussion? What kind of social phenomena could we potentially expect to see manifest within the structure? I'll take a look at both the potentially positive effects - as well as attempt to envision how the concept could end up with undesired outcomes. After all, most social media innovations have initially been marketed with uncritical praise for their positive social effects and democratic nature while the reality has been quite far from it.

Broadening media consumption patterns. People are already aggregating their media content through different means such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit or Ampparit. This concept would provide a novel way of aggregating content, one that doesn't filter the content based on the connections you have or based on the preferences of a single dominant majority. By exposing people to a broader spectrum of perspectives, it could mitigate the echo chamber effects of social networks and help users gain an understanding of the plurality of perspectives

on topics.

Liking becomes the new demonstrating. For the users who vote by liking or disliking posts within a topic, the "liking" becomes a way of virtually demonstrating and supporting a message they align with, giving it more visibility in the public sphere. The mechanism is analogous to the idea of demonstrating at a protest to raise awareness for a cause or point-of-view, the effort required, however, is considerably smaller. This could encourage more people to participate politically. On the flip side, the significance of liking could be used maliciously as well. "Brigading" refers to the orchestration of large groups of people online into "voting brigades" in an attempt to influence an online vote to favor a certain – often malicious or at least mischievous – objective. Another potential issue are professional armies of trolls aiming to distort the public's perception of an issue and its

Centrist and moderate perspectives get more visibility. Thanks to affinity-based sorting, the centrist and less confrontational opinions could get more visibility than currently on social media. If we consider the two practices of rallying and deliberating, in a typical social media environment the deliberating posts would likely

get less reach and support than the combative, support-seeking rallying posts. However, with this concept the rallying posts that get a lot of likes and dislikes would inhabit the two ends of the affinity spectrum while the more compromise-seeking or pragmatic deliberating posts would likely be able to use the middle ground to climb to the top with fewer likes but considerably less dislikes. This could help in mitigating the polarising effects of social networks.

Alternative views are brought into the mainstream. Affinity-based sorting of posts in a topic would allow for minority perspectives to be brought into the collection of posts within a topic. This can be a good thing when the political imagination around a topic has stagnated and become myopic to broader considerations that are valuable. However, this could also result in the surfacing of false information or criminal content (such as content that instigates violence or hatred) that would normally be filtered out when shared through more traditional media channels. It would potentially require more critical media reading skills from the user to identify which sources to trust. This could also be potentially addressed with certain design solutions, such as allowing users to tag content which they deem as false or criminal.

New sections of the population are included in political activity. Ultimately, by creating better channels for online political participation, we could expect more people to participate in political activity. Christensen & Bengtsson (2011) studied the extent to which the Internet in Finland mobilizes citizens who are both willing and able to participate in political matters, but just happen to prefer online participation to offline participation. They found that 16% of the population of Finland would not be active without the possibilities for participation offered by the Internet. These people were predominantly female and young. They were also far from arm-chair activists but were found to be at least as politically competent as their politically active counterparts who preferred offline participation. This would suggest that further extending the possibilities for political participation into the online world with a concept such as the one presented here could have a positive effect on engaging larger and previously marginalised parts of the population within political activity.

Reflection

Next, I will reflect on the project as a whole and evaluate how I have succeeded in my initial

goals as well as the process and methods I used: what was useful, what could have been done better?

Overall, I'm happy with the results of the project. What started as a spontaneous if somewhat naive idea for a service turned into an intense exploration of a design space from multiple perspectives: academic discourse, benchmarking, interviews, design co-creation, synthesis into a point-of-view, and ultimately a novel service concept. While the concept itself is only an initial opening into an interesting direction, I feel it has promise for further development and as it is can already spark discussion. I feel the key contribution of the exploration is the overall idea of crowdsourcing news and content within a topic and presenting it on an interface with hotness and affinity based sorting. Obviously they are just ideas at the moment and I have not fully explored their feasibility, but this should be a priority for further exploration and future research.

In terms of the methods and approach used, I have presented a designerly approach and applied in this thesis. In the process of exploration, I have explicated my cultural approach to design work, appropriating practice-theoretical thinking into how I conceptualise the design

space and human-centered design in general. Practice theory has been a theoretical lens through which I have approached many projects in my professional career. However, this thesis provided the impetus to explicitly articulate the ideas that had been formulating in my design approach for some time already. This explicit academic articulation of my approach helped me clarify some of its notions in the process. This project also provides an account of how my practice-oriented approach helped me discover the insights that led to the final concept. Hence, I would argue the approach can be successful in inspiring the design of innovative service concepts.

The design project and the writing of this report – not including the initial idea and inspiration – was completed within an intense period of work between December 2015 and April 2016. This required the strategic management of limited resources of time and energy. Next, I will reflect on how I used my time and resources, and what I could have done better or where there is opportunity to learn from.

Resourcing for thesis report writing. In planning the work, I initially failed to account properly for the amount of time the writing of this report would require. My original ambition was

to have time for prototyping and testing ideas I might come up with. However, I am happy with the result and this report would probably not be as good if I were to have emphasized any additional design work and prototyping over the report writing and reflection.

Developing multiple concepts to explore in parallel. Something that I considered during the project was: Should I have taken more than one concept into co-creation? Now, I took a set of ideas that I felt could probably be turned into one or more concepts. Many design exploration approaches suggest coming up with parallel concepts and many ideas, so that there is as much breadth as possible in the exploration of possibilities. The *risk* with taking just one set of ideas into the co-creation sessions is that if I decide that the direction is not viable later on, I'm left with (almost) nothing or at least a difficult situation of exploring one direction only to have to scrap a lot of work. However, considering the limited time available and the fact that I was working alone, I could have not been able to develop multiple concepts to explore in parallel without delaying the project. I did also consider if I should not take any ideas to co-creation and instead just focus on interviewing the participants without any ideas. In retrospect, it was much better to take the one

set of ideas into co-creation than to not take any ideas into it. The topic I'm exploring now is so difficult and abstract to grasp, it would have been really hard to get anything concrete out of the interviews if I didn't have any stimulus material to bounce ideas off of. Ultimately, even though I may have discovered that the idea is not viable, at least talking to people significantly increased the speed and conceptual breadth at which it was possible to explore the ideas. Each carefully selected participant brought up different perspectives and insight to how the ideas could be developed further. In combination with synthesis insights and some hard thinking and creative exploration, the ideas eventually "pivoted" from what they originally were – which the interviews and co-creation suggested wouldn't work well – into something very interesting and potentially successful. This led me to think about strategic design thinking in resourceful exploration of concepts.

Strategies for design innovation: the design consultancy vs. the venture approaches

When a design consultancy or firm looks to help clients with innovation they typically aim to keep a broad approach. They want to explore a multitude of ideas to ensure that they can find at least one good idea that the client will be sat-

isified with. This way the client can feel that their budget has been spent wisely. Startup ventures - on the other hand - usually start with a single idea. Although often the feeling that the idea is good is a prerequisite for the startup's existence. This thesis project employed a human-centred design methodology in search for novel service concepts. My approach has been closer to one of a startup-like venture than a design consultancy. The project began out of my passionate interests and with a single idea. But over time and with exposure to research, further development and evaluation the idea's shortcomings were exposed and understood. Each time this led to me seeking a new direction in which to take the work. And each time an insight led me to "pivot" the idea into something new - without having to scrap all of the work I had done so far. "Pivoting" is an expression used generously in the tech startup scene. It refers to the act of altering the service concept or business model of a venture to something very different without having to discard all of the work done. Typically this could mean completely changing its value proposition or its intended target customer as a result of discovering the shortcomings of the originally intended approach. This is an apt analogy to what happened to my ideas during this project. They ran into issues - but through a stroke of insight evolved and transformed into

something else. And the story of how the concept came to be what it is is what I've attempted to document in this thesis report.

Final words

This project has been important to me personally. I've tried to address - through the application of design - challenges in society that I feel need attention. Hence, I wanted to make it count. I'm happy with the results of the project. While it's only a small contribution in a direction, I believe it's a small contribution *in the right direction*. I hope to continue working with this concept and within the themes explored in this thesis. I also invite others continue this work by evaluating and critiquing it, exploring its ideas further, and any new ideas it might inspire. Future research should explore further how collective intelligence mechanisms can help us make sense of the social reality around us and how they can allow us to participate in politics to a much greater degree and with more ease. There is so much untapped energy and cognitive potential in the crowds. It's a matter of discovering and cultivating the constructive practices that can heighten our collective awareness, imagination and capacity for decision making. Slavin (2016)

has put forth an inspiring notion of *design as participation* in complex adaptive systems. The complex adaptive system in this case is our democratic society. And the contribution of this thesis - my humble attempt at participation.

I'd like to thank everyone who helped me in this thesis: My supervisor, Rasmus Vuori, and my advisor, Mia Muurimäki, as well as the design co-creation participants who expended hours of their valuable time in working with me on my ideas and inspiring me with their insightful perspectives on politics and political discussion. Thanks also to my family and friends as well, who have been so supportive of this project. I couldn't have done it without the help of you all.

References

- Barber, B. (1998) *A Passion for Democracy: American Essays*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Barber, B. R. (1984) *Strong democracy: participatory politics for a new age*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Benhabib, S. (1996) Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy, in *Democracy and Difference*, Benhabib, S. ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Benkler, Y. (2006) *The Wealth of Networks*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Botero, A. (2013) Expanding design space (s): design in communal endeavours. Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture, doctoral dissertation.
- Buxton, B. (2007) *Sketching user experiences – Getting the design right and the right design*. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufman.
- Christensen, H. S. & Bengtsson, Å. (2011) The political competence of internet participants. *Information, Communication & Society*, 14:6, 896-916, [DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2011.566931].
- Couldry, N. (2004) Theorising media as practice. *Social semiotics*, 14(2), 115-132.
- Coyne, R. (2005) Wicked problems revisited. *Design studies*, 26(1), 5-17.
- Cross, N. (2001) Designerly ways of knowing: Design discipline versus design science. *Design Studies*, 17(3), 49-55.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990) *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Dahlberg, L. (2000) *The Internet and the public sphere: A critical analysis of the possibility*

of online discourse enhancing deliberative democracy, doctoral dissertation in sociology, Massey University.

Dahlberg, L. (2001a) The Internet and Democratic Discourse: Exploring The Prospects of Online Deliberative Forums Extending the Public Sphere. *Information, Communication & Society*, 4:4, 615-633

Dahlberg, L. (2001b) Extending the public sphere through cyberspace: the case of Minnesota E-Democracy. *FirstMonday*, 6. Online. Available at <http://www.firstmonday.dk/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/838/747> (Retrieved 26.2.2016)

Doctor, S. & Dutton, W. H. (1998) The First Amendment online: Santa Monica's Public Electronic Network, in *Cyberdemocracy: Technology, Cities and Civic Networks*, eds. R. Tsagarousianou, D. Tambini, & C. Bryon. London: Routledge. p. 125-151

Engeström, J. (2005). Why some social network services work and others don't - Or: the case for object-centered sociality. [<http://www.zengestrom.com/blog/2005/04/why-some-social-network-services-work-and-others-dont-or-the-case-for-object-centered-sociality.html>]

Retrieved 23.3.2016.

Fraser, N. (1990) Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. *Social Text*, No. 25/26, p. 56-80

Habermas, J. (1991) Further Reflections on the Public Sphere, in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Calhoun, C. ed. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Habermas, J (1995) Reconciliation through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism, *The Journal of Philosophy*, XXII:3.

Hanington, B. (2003) Methods in the Making: A Perspective on the State of Human Research in Design. *Design Issues*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Autumn 2003.

Howe, J. (2008) *Crowdsourcing*. New York: Crown Business.

Klein, G. & Moon, B. & Hoffman, R. (2006) Making Sense of Sensemaking 1: Alternative Perspectives. *Intelligent Systems* (IEEE) 21:4.

Kolko, J. (2007) Information Architecture and

Design Strategy. *IDSA 2007 Educational Conference Proceedings*. San Francisco: IDSA.

Kolko, J. (2010) Abductive Thinking and Sensemaking: The Drivers of Design Synthesis. *Design Issues*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Winter 2010.

Krippendorff, K. (2005) *The semantic turn: A new foundation for design*. crc Press.

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985

Loader, B. D. & Mercea, D. (2011) Networking democracy? Social media innovations in participatory politics. *Information, Communication and Society*, 14(6), pp. 757-769

Malone, T. W. (2004) *The Future of Work*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Malone, T. W. & Laubacher, R. & Dellarocas, C. (2009) Harnessing Crowds: Mapping the Genome of Collective Intelligence. *MIT Sloan Research Paper No. 4732-09*. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1381502> or <http://>

dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1381502 - Retrieved 10.3.2016

McKee (2005) *The Public Sphere: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moggridge, B. (2007) *Designing interactions*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Moore, G. A. (2002) *Crossing the chasm*. New York: Harper Business Essentials.

Mouffe, C. (1999) Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism? *Social Research*, Vol. 66, No. 3, pp. 745-758.

Munroe, R. (2009) reddit's new comment sorting system. *The Reddit Blog*, Thursday October 15, 2009. [<http://www.redditblog.com/2009/10/reddits-new-comment-sorting-system.html>] retrieved 3.4.2016

Norman, D. A. (1988) *The Psychology of Everyday Things*. New York: Basic Books.

Norman, D. A. (2005) Human-centered design considered harmful. *Interactions*, 12(4), 14-19.

Papacharissi, Z. (2010) *A Private Sphere: Democracy in a Digital Age*. Cambridge: Polity.

Referenced from Loader & Mercea (2011).

Peirce, C. S. (1998) On the Logic of Drawing History from Ancient Documents. *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, 1893-1913* by Charles S. Peirce, edited by Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Reckwitz, A. (2002) Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(2): 243-263.

Robinson, R. E. (1993) What to do with a Human Factor: A Manifesto of Sorts. *American Center for Design Journal*, No. 7, p. 63-73.

Salihefendic, A. (2015) How Reddit ranking algorithms work. *Medium*, [<https://medium.com/hacking-and-gonzo/how-reddit-ranking-algorithms-work-ef11e33d0d9#.469jdej-ki>]. Retrieved 2.4.2016

Sanders, E. B. N. & Stappers, P. J. (2008) Co-creation and the new landscapes of design. *Co-design*, 4(1), 5-18.

Schatzki, T. (1996) *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the*

Social. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Shove, E. & Pantzar, M. (2005) Consumers, Producers and Practices: Understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic Walking. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 5(1): 43-64.

Slavin, K. (2016) Design as Participation. *Journal of Design and Science*, PubPub, [<http://jods.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/design-as-participation>]. Retrieved 31.3.2016.

Stolterman, E. (2008) The nature of design practice and implications for interaction design research. *International Journal of Design*, 2(1), 55-65.

Surowiecki, J. (2004) *The Wisdom of Crowds*. New York: Doubleday.

Squires, J. (1998) In different voices: deliberative democracy and aestheticist politics, in *The Politics of Postmodernity*, eds. J. Goog & I. Velody. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 126-146.

Tapscott, D. & Williams, A. D. (2006) *Wikinomics*. New York: Penguin.

Van Zoonen, L. (2005) *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Warde, A. (2005) Consumption and theories of practice. *Journal of consumer culture*, 5(2), 131-153.

Wasson, C. (2000) Ethnography in the Field of Design. *Human Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 4, 2000.

Westerlund, B. (2009) *Design Space Exploration: Co-operative creation of proposals for desired interactions with future artefacts*, Doctoral thesis. Stockholm: KTH. 2009. Trita-CSC-A, 17, ISBN: 978-91-7415-445-0

Wilhelm, A. (2000) *Democracy in the Digital Age: Challenges to Political Life in Cyberspace*, London: Routledge

Wikipedia (2016) 1% rule (Internet culture). *Wikipedia*. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1%25_rule_\(Internet_culture\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1%25_rule_(Internet_culture))] retrieved 3.4.2016.

Woolley, A. W. & Chabris, C. F. & Pentland, A. & Hashmi, N. & Malone, T. W. (2010) Evidence for a Collective Intelligence Factor in the Per-

formance of Human Groups. *Science* 330, 686

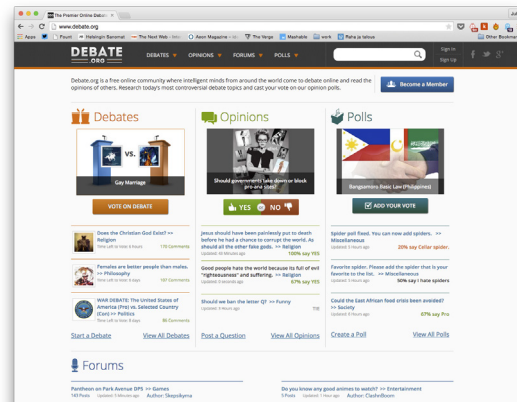
Žižek, S. (1992) *Enjoy Your Symptom*. London: Routledge.

Appendices

Appendix A: Benchmarking

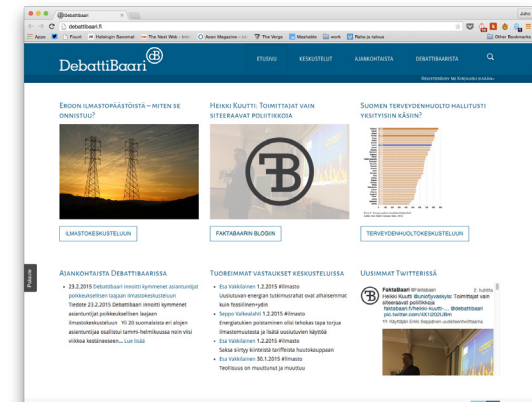
Debate.org

A site that offers debates and opinion polls on issues from philosophy to politics. Creates a forum where 1-on-1 or team-based debates happen and visitors vote on results.



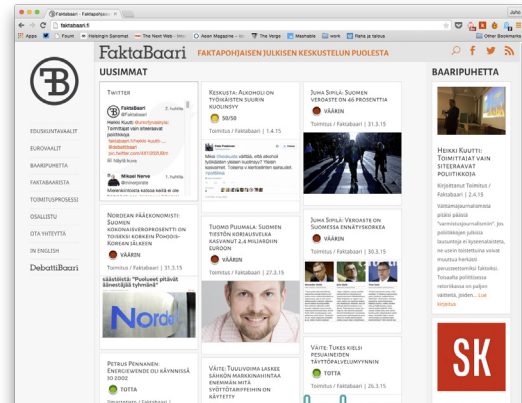
Debattibaari.fi

Discussion forum for debating current issues.



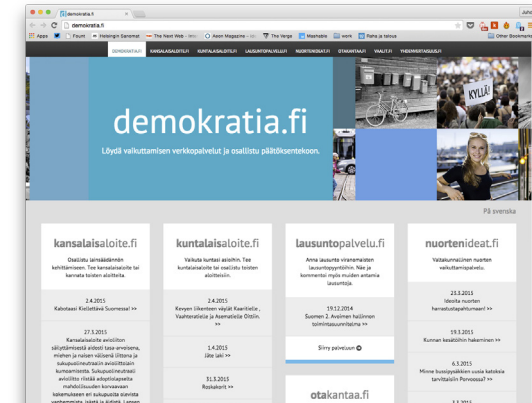
Faktabaari.fi

Users can submit statements made by politicians to be fact-checked.



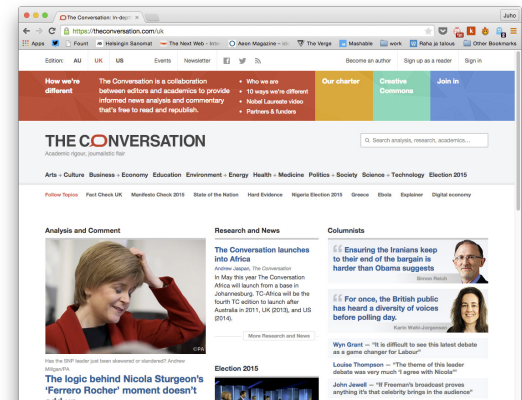
Demokratia.fi

Portal connecting Finnish e-Democracy projects.



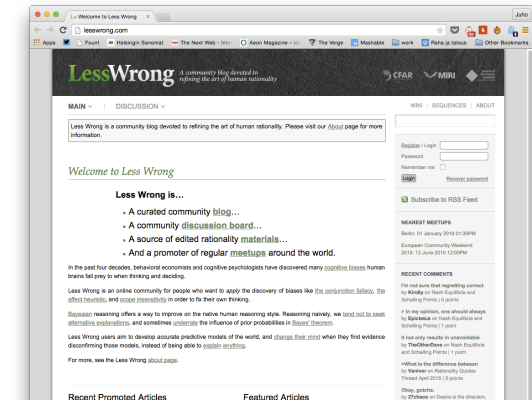
Theconversation.com

The Australian inspiration for debattibaari.fi.



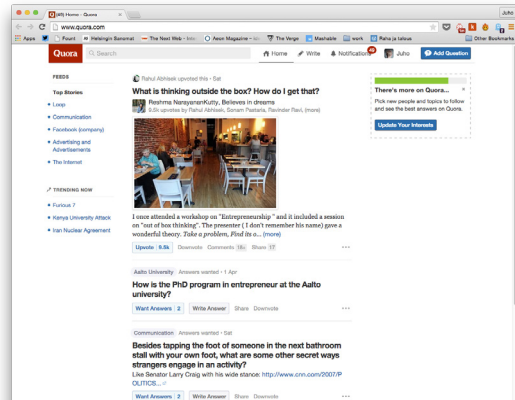
LessWrong.com

Uses Reddit.com source code



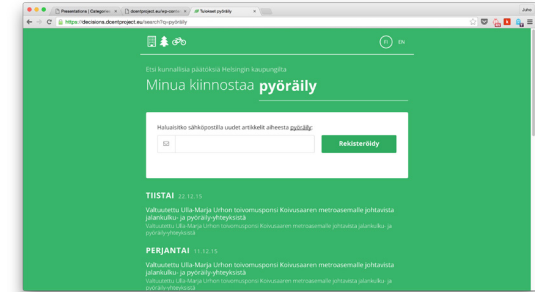
Quora.com

Crowdsourced Q+A



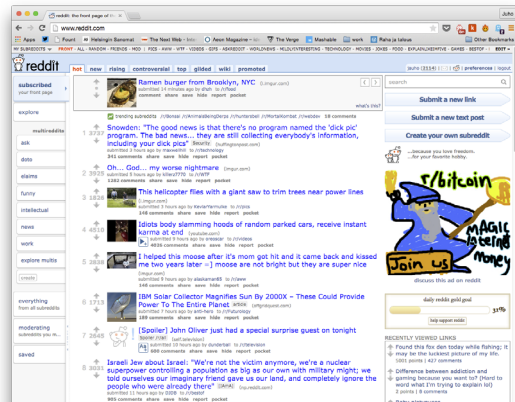
decisions.d-centproject.org

“Search municipal decisions for the city of Helsinki”



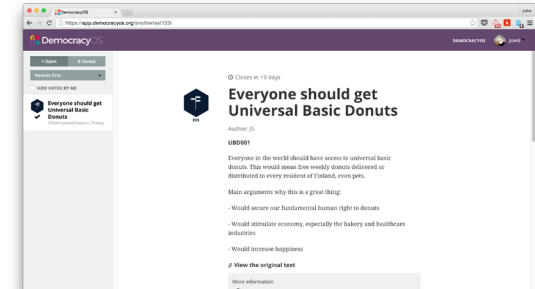
Reddit.com

“The front page of the Internet”



DemocracyOS

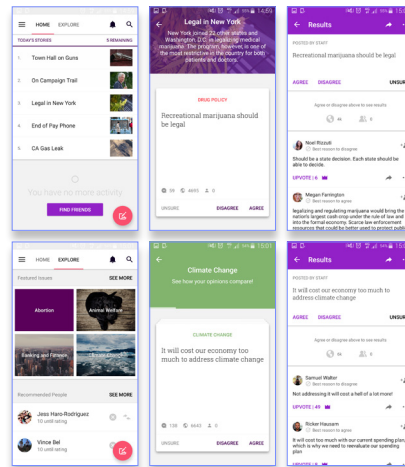
“DemocracyOS is an online space for deliberation and voting on political proposals. It is a platform for a more open and participatory government. The software aims to stimulate better arguments and come to better rulings, as peers.”



Brigade

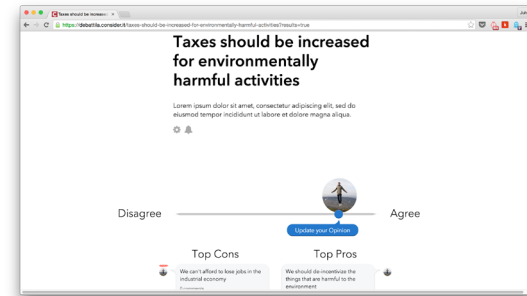
“DEMOCRACY STARTS WHEN YOU TAKE A STAND.”

Brigade is a mobile application that makes taking a position easy and connects people who have similar positions on issues.

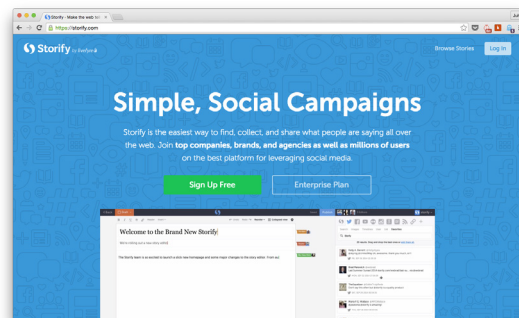


Consider.it

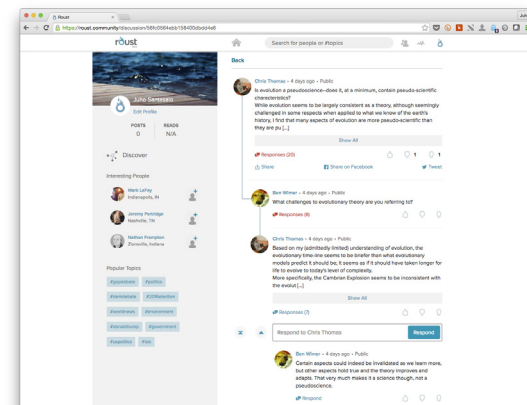
“Think Better Together. Consider.it can help you collect feedback, engage stakeholders, make group decisions, teach critical thinking, and more.”



Storify

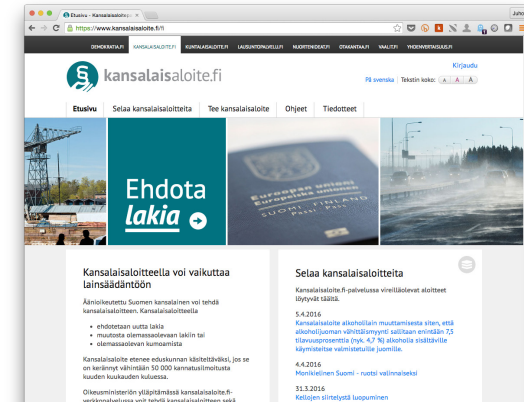


Roust



Kansalaisaloite.fi

If the online petitions get enough signatures, they will be taken to the Finnish Parliament for consideration



Suomi24.fi

One of the most popular discussion forums in Finland.



Appendix B: Interview Discussion Guide

Tavoitteet (haluan ymmärtää...)

- Käytännöt: Miten haastateltavat osallistuvat politiikkaan ja poliittiseen keskusteluun (sekä yksityishenkilöinä että rooliensa kautta), tavat ja tarinat
- Käytännöt: Miten haastateltavat käyttävät (sosiaalista) mediaa, tapoja ja tarinoita
- Esteitä: Mikä estää (kuplansa ulkopuolisen) poliittisen keskustelun?
- Sisältö: Minkälainen tieto olisi hyödyllistä lisäämään poliittista aktiivisuutta, sisältö
- Ongelmakohtia: Mitä asioita pitäisi ottaa huomioon kun vien ideoitani eteenpäin?
- Kehitysideat: Miten ideoitani saa parempia?
- Motivaatioita ja tavoitteita: Mitä tavoitteita tai tehtäviä ideat voisivat auttaa toteuttamaan?

Alkuun

- Sopiiko, että otan pari kuvaa haastattelusta? Se on vain graduraporttiini ja dokumentaatioksi projektista.
- Sopiiko, että nauhotan haastattelun? Se on vain itseäni varten.
- Tutkiva palvelumuotoiluprosjekti aiheesta “poliittista keskustelua tukevat uusmediakonseptit”
- Haastattelu kestää n. tunnin, max 1,5 - kerrotko milloin meidän pitäisi lopettaa?
- Haluan juttelumme aikana myös osallistaa sinua kehittämään ajatuksiani, siksi toivon, että vastaat mahdollisimman rehellisesti ja avoimesti.

Taustaa

- Kerro vähän itsestäsi
- Mihin käytät päiväsi tai mitä teet työksesi?
- Minkälainen perhetilanne?
- Asutko yksin?
- Mitä harrastat vapaa-ajalla?
- Mikä innostaa sua?

Mediankäyttö

- Käytätkö paljon internetiä? Mihin? Miksi?
- Mediat, joita käytät eniten? Miksi?
- Onko sinulla jotain toistuvia tapoja tai käytäntöjä median seuraamisessa? Kerro niistä.
- Osallistutko keskusteluun tai tuotatko sisältöä nettiin? Minkälaisia? Miksi? Miksi et?
- Entä osallistutko muuten kuin sisältöä tuottamalla, esim. tykkäämällä tai äänestämällä jonkun sisällön puolesta?

Politiikka ja poliittinen aktiivisuus

- Kiinnostaaako yhteiskunnalliset asiat? Onko lempiaihetta? Osallistutko jollain tavalla?
- Seuraatko politiikkaa? Miten? Puoluepolitiikka?
- Onko sinulla jotain toistuvia tapoja tai käytäntöjä siinä miten harrastat politiikkaa? Kerro niistä.
- Mitä ongelmia näet politiikassa tai mitä pitäisi parantaa?

Poliittinen keskustelu netissä

- Kommentoitko politiikkaa tai osallistutko keskusteluun politiikasta netissä? Miten? Miksi? Miksi et?
- Mihin pyrit osallistumalla keskusteluun netissä? Kerro joku esimerkki
- Muistatko yhtään kertaa, kun olet mielestäsi osallistunut hyödylliseen poliittiseen keskusteluun netissä? Kerro siitä.
- Onko sinulla jotain toistuvia tapoja osallistua poliittiseen keskusteluun netissä? Kerro niistä.
- Mikä tekee poliittisesta keskustelusta niin vaikeaa? Miksi?
- Mitä esteitä näet rakentavalle poliittiselle keskustelulle netissä? Miksi?

Co-Design alustus

- Haluan osallistaa mukaan suunnitteluun. Esittelen ideoitani. Uudet ideat ja parannusehdotukset tervetulleita.
- Miten näistä saisi parempia (sulle)?
- Mitä pitäisi ottaa huomioon eteenpäin viemisessä?

Projektin tavoitteet, taustaoletukset ja teema

- Voit sanoa suoraan ääneen mitä ajattelet ja tulee mieleen. Kehitä!

Ideat (hyödyt)

- Kuulostaisiko tämä sinulle arvokkaalta tai hyödylliseltä? Miksi?
- Mitä olisi tärkeää ottaa huomioon jatkekehityksessä?
- Mitä puuttuu?
- Miten tätä voisi parantaa? Mitä vaihtoehtoisia ideoita tulee?
- PIIRRÄ: Minkälaisia kysymyksiä tai jäsentelyitä palvelussa pitäisi olla?

Käyttötarinat

- Keksitään yhdessä käyttötarina! (haastateltavan lähtökohdista)
- Mitä tulee mieleen?
- Voisitko samaistua tai nähdä itseäsi toimimassa näin? Miksi?
- Miten tästä saisi paremman tai uskottavamman?

Lopetus

- Tämä taisi olla tässä. Onko jotain mitä vielä haluat sanoa tai ehdottaa?
- Kiitos osallistumisesta!
- Sitä mukaan kun projekti etenee, saattaa tulla tilanne, jossa haluaisin testata jotain kehittämäni ideoita tai konsepteja. Voinko ottaa yhteyttä uudestaan esim. kuukauden-parin päästä?

Ota kuvia!

Appendix C: Interview and co-design debriefs

Niklas, 36

NGO veteran & "Political nerd"



"A lot of my work is selling ideas and creating an optimal environment for my NGOs. It's about people skills."

Role practices and motivations

- Main responsibilities through work: Securing funding, maintaining relations to funding partners (FM, EU, private), managing projects (12 total), financial planning, promoting the interests of the organisation (creating a beneficial environment for work)
- "It's mostly people work" - need to be a salesman for ideas. Social awareness key: know when to speak up but also know when to shut up.
- Financiers want to see results and know their money is well spent
- Uses social media for organising POW work (Secret FB group)
- Twitter can be used to challenge people publicly - but it's not great otherwise

Insights

- Problem: Bubble/tribe phenomenon - (thanks to social media) people are losing the ability to respectfully disagree on things
- Problem: Politicians have lost touch with the daily lives of poor/average Finns
- Problem: Lots of passive people
- Why is dialogue so hard? People make assumptions about "the other side" and purposefully misunderstand them
- Politicians have intentionally or unintentionally made the political playing field smaller (by giving away power to private interests)
- Interesting (and sane) political discussion happens in some Facebook groups dedicated to a specific topic (e.g. "Uusi energiapolitiikka")

About

- Family: Wife and young kid
- Lives in Kontula, North Helsinki suburbs
- Job: Director of Operations for VIKES, an NGO focused on developing freedom of speech in media in Finland and helping develop media and communications practices in both in developing countries and Finland.
- Past: DEMO (NGO that lobbies democracy to political parties)
- Chairman of the Board of Protect Our Winters (POW)
- Board Member for KEPA (Umbrella organisation for NGOs in Finland focusing on development cooperation in Finland)
- Gets excited about making the world a better place

Ideas

- Goal: How to break hegemonic discourses? How to broaden the discussion to include more than the dominant thinking?
- Mouffe assumption: The political parties are converging in their thinking and ideas
- Mouffe assumption: "vastakkainasettelu" could be "vaihtoehdot"
- Ratings/review system from ebay or huuto.net

Opportunity areas

- HMW get people to consider the other side's arguments? The debate club method: Give them a position that they need to argue for and score them on how good it's considered.
- HMW make the options more visible (to break hegemonic discourse)?
- HMW build a system that rewards positive contributions?



Lilja, 28

Multi-expert policy wonk & debunker

“My knowledge of the world is built like a pyramid up from the lowest scientifically confirmed premise”

Role practices and motivations

- Enjoys diving deeply into a subject (e.g. electronic music, public procurement practice), researching it and writing [e.g. a blog post] about it
- Debunks social media myths that circulate and annoy her
- Consults and speaks to government officials on a variety of topics (e.g. overlapping benefit systems)
- Enjoys visualising complex processes
- Approach to politics: “Those that have a capacity to contribute have a moral obligation to do so” (expert knowledge)
- Writes to industry magazines and journals (e.g. “Työeläke”) about expert topics
- Enjoys thinking about systems

Insights

- Problem: “[Differently thinking] people speak in completely different languages”
- Ideological vs. pragmatic vs. sentimental
- When an idealist observes something wrong with the world, she “goes to war with reality” - focus on symbolic meanings
- When a pragmatist observes something wrong with the world, she looks at the required next steps towards a better vision of the future
- “Idealism is treatable with reading”
- Problem: “Today we’ve lost a common vision of what we’re attempting to achieve as a nation or ‘what is Finland?’”
- Problem: We risk slipping towards a ‘fuck you society’, where nobody trusts anyone and cooperation becomes impossible.

About

- Lives in Alppila, in a relationship
- Self-described “stoic personality”
- Capacity to remember a lot of information when it’s attached to existing logical knowledge structures
- Commentator in national politics, does not hold position, active blogger (blog was awarded “Best Political Blog of 2015”)
- Owns and runs company that develops “accommodation capsules”
- Member of the board of the Helsinki Transport company (HKL)
- Member of the IT section of the Helsinki City Board
- Enjoys switching roles and works on many projects in different fields at a given time
- Previously worked as a graphic designer

Ideas

- In the “likes=visibility” (tai likes=true) scheme, the most populist, provocative and melodramatic positions dominate the discussions (=not good)
- “People who come from different perspectives need to meet face-to-face or otherwise they will form echo chambers [of like-minded people]”
- “Vastakkainasettelu on vain kipinä keskustelulle, mutta sen on jäätävä siihen - muuten syntyy tulipalo”
- “Kun heimot sotii, tarvitaan sovittelija”
- “Thunderdome” - only see updates from people who aren’t in your social networks (inverse echo chamber)

Opportunity areas

- HMW help people to build bridges between “bubbles” and ways of seeing things?
- HMW help people build trust with others who don’t think in similar terms?
- HMW get people working towards a common goal?
- HMW get the disenfranchised PS people to feel like they’re included in the Finnish project?
- HMW incentivize constructive discursive practices?

Nina, 29

Women's studies academic & activist

"I'm a feminist activist but also an introvert - so I prefer to contribute by writing rather than demonstrating"

Role practices and motivations

- Works from home. "It's quieter and more relaxed here than at the Uni"
- Twitter network consists of "regular people like me", feminists, and "green leftists" but also True Finns (persut) to follow their arguments
- Follows but does not* participate in FB group: "Feministiryhmä" for feminists, has hard discussions on feminist topics (e.g. prostitution) but among feminists. *because her students are also there (power relationship)
- Activism: As an introvert, prefers to contribute through observation, analysis and writing ("god in the background")

Insights

- Problem: People on Twitter react and jump to conclusions quickly. It's sometimes impossible for the OP to answer to a flood of tweets because the phenomena moves so quickly and taps into existing feelings ("where", people waiting for a reason)
- Problem: Politicians downplaying the seriousness of hate speech
- Terms: "Some people are allergic to the term 'feminism'. They would prefer to use another term for it, like 'equalism'. This ignores history of the feminist movement."
- Cross-political exposure: "For me it's important to know what people who think differently politically are arguing because we do need to get along together somehow"

About

- Lives in Toukola with SO, a cat and a dog
- Work: Writing Ph.D dissertation in Gender Studies: How are people influencing LGBT politics?
- Self-proclaimed feminist, meaning someone who acknowledges how gender can be used for power and attempts to even the playing field
- Member of the board for the "Naisasialiitto Unioni ry" (Women's rights NGO)

Ideas

- Character limits: Discussion on Twitter is difficult because of the 140 character limit
- Privacy continuum from anonymous to real with credentials: Users could decide how much they reveal of their true identity and credentials to comment on things. "I would use my real identity and credentials when commenting on my expertise - if I wasn't the only one."
- "Citation needed" or "Facts wrong" button
- "I want better reasoning" button
- Gamification: Points for contributions and trustworthiness
- "Tip someone about this discussion" button
- "Ask someone to answer" button (Kysy uskontotieteilijältä -palsta)

Opportunity areas

- HMW connect questions to the experts who really know how to answer to them?
- HMW ensure there is a diversity of opinions? "If you're the only one with a differing opinion, it can make you reconsider expressing it" (Spiral of Silence)
- HMW help people adopt the use of this service?

Matti, 28

IT expert & privacy advocate



"I don't usually know enough about politics to want to comment on social media. I'd rather talk with my friends."

Role practices and motivations

- Facebook: "I usually comment on things I know about, like food, space or technology"
- FB: "I don't really comment on politics, I'd rather talk about those things face to face with my friends", "I don't want to 'leak'"
- First thing in the morning: Reddit
- Other media: HS, US, IL (can't be trusted), /r/Suomi (full of homma people)

Insights

- Problem: Politicians don't understand the issues they're deciding on (Internet, privacy, technology), "if you don't know about the issues, you're the wrong person to be deciding on them"
- Problem: Black and white thinking on difficult topics (like immigration), "people get personal"
- Matti wasn't active in discussing politics but was interested in many political issues: space exploration (funding), science (funding), information and data security legislation, privacy, etc.

About

- Lives in Espoo, single
- Works as an IT B2B salesman
- Not particularly interested in politics but votes in elections
- Enjoys online gaming, cooking and hanging out with friends
- Interested in online privacy issues, IT, science, personal data policies of big corporations, and information security legislation

Ideas

- Anonymous commenting: "If it were possible to comment anonymously, it would be easier or more likely that I'd comment on things"
- "Politicians should cut the bullshit"
- "There should be an entrance exam for the parliament"
- Legislators should get technical expertise from [neutral] experts
- Politicians should be involved and included in the platform

Opportunity areas

- HMW lower the risk of "making a fool out of yourself" in talking about politics?
- HMW crowdsource technical or subject matter expertise on political ideas?
- HMW help passive voters choose a candidate to vote for in elections?



About

- Lives in Espoo with SO
- Diploma Engineer (DI) majoring in bioadaptive tech + organisational psychology
- Work: PA to MP Emma Kari (Green party)
- City Council Member for Espoo
- City Board Member for Espoo
- City Board representative for committee on early childhood education
- Finnish Greens board member
- Finnish Greens: Member of educational policy workgroup
- Gets excited about making the world a better place (education, learning) and whales (they're huge)
- Active in the scouts

Role practices and motivations

- MPs work very diverse: communicating, familiarizing oneself with issues, preparing things, administrative coordination
- Follows politics closely: listening to the grapevine, Green's own media tracking, social media + Ampparit.com Own "politician page" on FB: "Used to update blog more but FB is getting better", hides trolls and racist comments - but not critics
- Comments on own or others' statuses on FB "It's the market square of today"
- "I feel a moral obligation to pursue this career in politics, because I think I have what it takes to change things" (idealism, ideas, realism, capacity for sitting, debate/argumentative skills)

Ideas

- Crowdsourcing and collective intelligence should be used more in the preparatory stages of parliamentary or municipal proposals
- Could the calculations created by the energy ministry be open for checking through crowdsourcing? Now they're black box equations with ministers and ministry officials holding much power

Insights

- Politicians sit at the same coffee tables with their rivals. This helps cooperation and mitigates hostile tribalism.
- Problem: Hatespeech aims to limit freedom of speech and silence voices, "The younger, womaner, and whoever speaks about racism etc."
- Problem: "All female politicians are harassed", personally draws the line at threatening content, racism and sexual harassment. "I don't need to tolerate this"
- Problem: "Democracy isn't complete", lots of closed forums, opaqueness, passivity (young voters), lack of options
- Problem: Intentional misunderstanding
- Problem: Lack of options, "Force rhetoric", "We have to do this..."
- Problem: Transformation of media landscape - journalists don't have time

Opportunity areas

- HMW facilitate more "pondering discussion" on politics? "Politicians don't really ponder for media anymore, it's too risky (to be understood wrong)"
- HMW empower people to participate in decision-making? (e.g. participatory budgeting in Espoo youth matters)
- HMW ensure that people can flexibly decide their level of involvement in politics?

Tiina, 21

The Finns Party youth & free speech advocate



"I get excited about new ideas. We should have easier ways to try them."

About

- Lives in Tampere, in a relationship
- Studied biotechnology at TTY, "genetics of bacteria"
- The Finns Party Youth organisation & communications secretary
- Ran for MP in 2015 (True Finns)
- Easily excited about new ideas, doesn't hold well in long boring meetings
- Enjoys doing, influencing and participating

Role practices and motivations

- Work (comms secretary): follows what's going on in the media (e.g. ampparit)
- Work: runs social media campaigns "a picture and a budget"
- Had own blog since 2014 but these days prefers Uusi Suomi platform because its better in getting distribution and reach
- Checks the Uusi Suomi "featured blog posts" every day
- Frequently follows a current topic (e.g. immigration), does not take a direct position (yes/no, "screaming") but will bring some related, new perspective to the discussion in a blog post
- Shares news on Facebook with an accompanying text
- Tries actively to find differing opinions and perspectives on issues to get a more balanced view, "often, you can find your own position somewhere in between"
- Reddit "sensible middle-road thinking"

Ideas

- No private messages, only public: harassment sent in private messages
- Re:Habermasian assumption: "When talking about values (conservative&liberal) talking about them might not help (too deep-rooted) - but it's different when talking about solutions (e.g. to economy)"
- "When provoked, it usually focuses on the person" (e.g. Saku Timonen and his insulting style)
- "I disagree (but find interesting)" button != downvote
- Content: Ideas + Yes/No positions

Insights

- Problem: "If someone writes a moderate and sensible political post, no one will be interested in it."
- Problem: "You just drown in the newsfeed", so many new topics coming all the time
- Problem: "Anyone can look like an expert", most people are poor at critically evaluating their sources, differing opinions on economic policy, conspiracy theories, MV-magazine, "A mother of three healthy children' is believed just as easily as a medical doctor"
- Has set Facebook to automatically hide all posts/links coming from MV-magazine
- "Some statements in politics are purely about values, some are about facts"
- "It's nice to not be the only one taking a certain position"
- "Perception of reality gets distorted if you are only exposed to content from your own bubble"
- Problem: Ugly or radical expressions of thinking, "Sebastian T got a hangaman's rope in the mail", rape wishes = hate speech

Opportunity areas

- HMW make it about "giving visibility" rather than "i like this"? "I don't always agree but I might find a perspective interesting", someone argued in class about Greek people dying due to economic policy
- HMW promote expertise over ideology? Could we focus on ideas and solutions over value discussions?

Juuso, 37

Data visualisation expert & journalist

"I enjoy correcting people when they're wrong but always provide evidence"

Role practices and motivations

- Active on social media, writes carefully prepared public posts on current political topics, some get a wide reach
- "I participate less in political discussion these days, I find it detrimental to my psyche and I just don't have the time"
- "I usually write on social media because I'm trying to avoid work",
- Writes to debunk circulating incorrect information, to be a wise-ass
- "Or then I write about things that should get more attention, like the dependency ratio (huoltosuhde)"
- "People focus too much on the present, and believe things will continue like this and don't take emerging trends into account"

Insights

- MV-magazine type of things get people to "feel good about their world view"
- "We can expect to see a leftist-green version of MV-lehti in the future"
- Problem: People don't have good skills in evaluating their sources, "how can they suspect a conspiracy at HS but be totally uncritical of MV?"
- "For a lot of people sharing stuff on the internet is just a way of appearing like a certain type of person"
- Problem: (On solutions) "Even the government isn't measuring the effects of their proposals, though its in program"
- Clear distinction between questions around goals (value questions) and the solutions to achieve those (fact-based)

About

- Lives in Kallio
- Interested in data, its visualisation and application in understanding the world
- Found a passion for statistics through Internet debate, "I had to find something to back up my arguments, I had to argue because others were wrong" (Platinum & Stealth Unit communities/forums)
- Studied Graphic Design in Aalto ARTS but found only one course in data visualisation, ended up teaching it, now there's a major
- Runs informaatiomuotoilu.fi
- Works as a data visualisation designer, "lots of my actual work is coding, really"
- Member of the Greens
- Lay judge, appointed by Greens
- Vice member of the Board for City Museum

Ideas

- "Define the problem, let the professionals* (politicians) find the solutions" *note: or public officials?
- Mouffe assumption: "vastakkainasettelu" creates discussion but might lead to ingroup/outgroup behaviour
- Longer posts allow the writer to be more thorough and prepare for critique by gathering the evidence for their arguments, "I hate Twitter's 140 char limit"
- The same people who write on social media (FB, Twitter, blogs) might not be the same people who add the positions to the service
- Browser plugin that allows to quickly add to the service
- Prototype visualisation and data analysis with Facebook posts and scraped like data

Opportunity areas

- HMW engage the politically passive?
- HMW break the bubbles we're in?
- HMW signal what we think about posts? Emoticons? "This is important", "This is a problem", "lol seriously", "Best ever", turd
- HMW limit the complexity of reading the interface? Limit branching to 3? Require votes to branch a discussion?
- HMW broaden the experience beyond the platform? Reach young people through a video panel that goes through best content
- HMW build a community of people discussing in a constructive way or respectfully disagreeing on things? (like politicians amongst each other)
- HMW use/integrate existing content on other platforms?

Tuomas, 34

Digital journalism producer & TV host

"Most people don't care to talk or comment about politics. Why would they?"

Role practices and motivations

- Daily work centers around getting digital journalism pieces done on time
- Conceiving how interactive media could be used to tell news stories
- Uutisraportti (with two other writers): Wednesday morning is ideation for two hours, Thursday is full day of writing material, Friday is tweaking, rewriting and recording the show
- Not particularly active politically, does not comment seriously on politics
- Mostly makes jokes about politics and media approach to reporting on politics

Insights

- Annoying: "Perspective error", the comments on news pieces do NOT represent the opinions of people in general (but a small and vocal minority)
- Problem: "Finnish politics is so small-minded", management of common things, where are the visions and big ideas?
- Problem: We are missing opportunities to develop Finland because of the slowness of our system, "Cleantech train already went", also last elections gave a clear mandate to the PM but now nothing is getting done anyway
- Problem: Because of the political jargon, the issues are hard to approach, "Sosiaali- ja Terveystieteiden tutkimus (SOTE)" wtf

About

- Lives in Hyvinkää, married with two children
- Lives in a house he built himself
- Works in HS Datadesk, producing digital journalism
- Works (2 days a week) also as TV host and showrunner for Sanoma's Uutisraportti, a satirical news talk show
- Gets excited about the big things being done in the USA and internationally, likes adapting international ideas to Finland
- Datadesk: Did a big data visualisation piece on what interests groups lobby to the parliament
- Interested in macroeconomics and ideological ideas/movements

Ideas

- In the UK, proposals are named after the responsible lord or patron, "Lord Sutton's proposal" -> personal accountability
- Check out Stack overflow's reputation system
- "Bestof" certain comments, someone could give a commend of a good comment/ contribution in a discussion. Feature these comments somewhere separately?

Opportunity areas

- Most people don't care about politics. HMW ensure that enough users participate in producing content?
- Re: "Perspective error" HMW make the data (upvotes/downvotes, yes/no, approve/disapprove) somehow representative?
- Re: "Perspective error" HMW give more prominence to the moderate voices in a discussion?

